SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 357. FOR WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 2ND, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

THE FIRST GRAND

"PIONEER" REDUCTION SALE

By Messrs. F. HODGSON & SON,
The Well-known Carpet Manufacturers of the City of Leeds.

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	Each.		Each.
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7½ft. by 9ft. " " "	7/6	12ft. by 12ft., " " "	15/6
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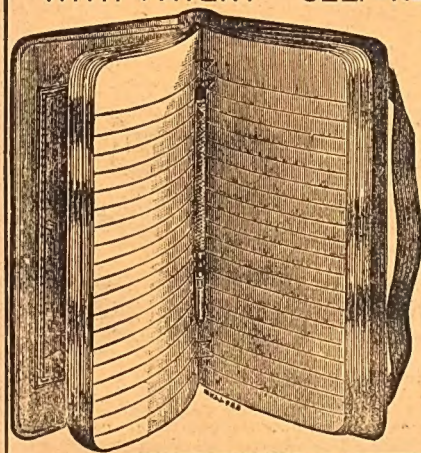

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED by C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 357. [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending November 2nd, 1895.

His Story—and Mine.

I.

IT was before ill days had fallen and the troopships were taken from Portsmouth.

Otherwise, counting by years, it was not so very long ago.

The *Malabar* had been in just four hours. The people I had grown used to having about me on the voyage were making quick departures, leaving me alone.

In the bustle, now and then, someone stopped to offer me a hand as he hurried away, but not often. No one pitied me. Every trooper brings back to England at least one individual of the class into which I had been counted; this time I chanced to be that individual. It did not matter much. After people have made half-a-dozen passages between Bombay and Portsmouth they get used to things, and do not notice. Only I could have laughed at them sometimes. I was the supposed victim of a "touch of sun."

Always—in India—when a man lets a story into his life, and it gets the better of him, they put it down to a touch of sun. This never varies. It covers nearly all the vagaries of life you meet with after the Suez Canal.

I was pacing to and fro along the jetty, thinking my story all out again, chapter by chapter, when presently a hand touched me, and old Matthews was lugging me back on board to the saloon fire.

I had not seen him for five years, yet it seemed quite the right thing for him to be doing. He had changed, too. It was some time before I noticed it; when I did, however, I got a shock. Matthews and I had been friends in our college days, and we were friends still, which says much for us both. The thing that had happened to me half a year previously had managed to snap every bond of faith I ever possessed in my fellow men, save this single one. I was just thinking how strange it was, when Mathews looked up and caught my gaze.

"I should fancy you never did any man an injury in your life, old fellow," I said, speaking out the thought that had grown upon me, and making him start by my abruptness.

"Some one did me an injury once, you know," I went on; "and I've got into a way of suspecting everybody I meet for it. I must run across him sooner or later. I feel it! And then! You shall hear all about it one day, Bob, but not now! And these fools call it a touch of sun. Ask any of them, and they'll tell you I'm wrong in my head. But you, Bob, you're different, old man, and," I added, "I'd trust you to the end of all things, Bob."

For a moment we sat looking into each other's eyes across the fire. And then Matthews spoke. Something in what I had said had turned him a shade paler under his deep, dark brown. Glancing back on it now, I cannot but see how odd it was that he should have commenced that story there and then. But such things do come about.

His story—and mine!

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So strangely, strongly knitted together. I wonder if lives are eternally getting mixed in that way? I have forgiven him now—at least, I think so, I hope so. Men should learn to forgive as women do. Let us hasten on, though, while in the mood. I feel I can write it all to-night.

I have been told that if two men, who knew each other long before either ever graced a gazette, part one morning on the Portsmouth jetty, and then meet again suddenly after five years, there is nearly always a tale to unfold. That was his—and mine.

I do not know how he began. He was speaking excitedly, though cautiously. I took up the thread somewhere here:

"I had a decent long spell of the hills, you know, Jack," he said. "Then one morning I got word to hurry down, and I was brute enough to complain.

"But it was as low-lying, unhealthy, God-forsaken a hole as ever existed; and just a week after my arrival they dragged the first cholera case into hospital, and my work began.

"How the curse got in amongst us from the native bazaar we never knew, for that den had been placed out of bounds three weeks earlier on suspicion.

"But there it was, looking as ugly as anything you like to think of. And though we soon had a marquee out on the cholera camp, and were ready to do our best, we saw that it was little use to hope for a great deal. It was too late!

"The rains were out of season, you remember, and the heat was horrible.

"Little Marden—poor lad!—who had breakfasted with us in the best of spirits, was buried before sundown, and another followed about midnight.

"The next morning saw a second marquee alongside the first. Nothing like plenty of room, we told ourselves. But the real crowding began some days later, when, to make things ghastlier, the panic started to take a hold, and one or two went down out of sheer fright.

"Jack——" Matthews broke off to touch my hand. "God alone knows how we got through it! There was no time to get the women and children clear. We were put in quarantine that first night; you understand what that means.

"The work was awful! There was no one to help. We wanted a woman or two, but you know me! I wouldn't take the men's wives, even to nurse each other. One or two offered, poor souls; I sent them back to their husbands and the kiddies. I haven't the stain of that on my life, any way!

"Things were getting worse, and were likely to be worse.

"At every turn it was the one cry: 'If only we had a single pair of extra willing hands.' And then *she* came.

"It was as I was leaving the tents one evening, to get an hour's rest before the horrible night should begin, when her little fingers touched my sleeve in the blistering sunset; and I heard her telling me, in her quick, quiet way, that she was a nurse, and had come to help.

"Jack, you don't know what that week made of me!

"Just then I saw nothing of how young and frail she was, what a mere child. She looked so brave standing there in the red glow of evening. And I only knew how badly we wanted someone, and that someone had come, and was used to sickness and death.

"I summed it all up as calmly and coolly as though she were just a partner I was selecting for a game of tennis.

"She was different from the other women. There were no little ones. She wasn't married. She told me about herself. Her father had died in Simla a year before, from a polo accident, and she had been nursing a Parsee's invalid daughter—that was all. I never dreamt of refusing her.

"That night the panic spirit was laid again, the poor beggars were behaving like gentlemen. She divided her time amongst the children and men. I think it was a big hulking lad of a recruit who christened her by the name we all learnt to know so well. He called her 'Camp Angel.' And Camp Angel she remained till the end."

II.

HE paused for breath.

I looked across at the white face, so altered from the old days, and wondered where the story would leave off for him. Poor Bob! And though his narrative thus far fitted somewhat vaguely with what had made such a wreck of me, I rose above the temptation, and would not doubt him yet.

"I needn't go on telling you the progress from day to day," he began again. "It just went worse and worse! Heavens, what a scourge!

"The heat was direful, the water running down till only a few pints were left in the bottom of the wells to reflect back the ferns growing on the sides. Morning by morning the sun rose scorching, with no hope of rain or relief. And evening saw it setting in a flame of livid fire. Camp Angel remained brave through it all. Dear, faithful little soul.

"About this time I noticed how fragile our little angel was, and the discovery caused me a bitter half hour. The first pangs of the sorrow which had since filled my days came as I, for a brief moment, allowed my thoughts to travel on ahead. But I drew up; after all, she was used to the sight of sickness and suffering, and I wanted her, I could not spare her. Thus I argued, and endeavoured to stifle the pity growing up in my heart for the sweet, patient, wee face. The most wonderful thing about that grand little woman was her patience.

"One hot, sultry evening I came upon her," he proceeded, "sitting outside a tent, a dying child on her lap.

"She looked up as I approached.

"'Tired?' she asked, with one of her rare, glorious smiles. 'Oh, if only the rains would come!' she added, and the prayer was in her eyes.

"The rains did come at last, they had to," he told me grimly. "But they were seven weeks late! Jack, you know the plains pretty well. Imagine, then, what we suffered for want of water during one of the hottest seasons that could be remembered! Cholera is bad enough, yet the other is worse, I think. The torture is longer, more harrowing, consequently.

"The rains came, I say. And never shall I forget the first shower. How it poured! A few hungering men and women stood and watched, and caught some drops feverishly in their hands, as though jealous lest the parched land should receive them all.

"The cholera began to abate. There were fewer cases, more recoveries.

"We returned to mess; a mere handful of gaunt, pale, tired wretches. We talked little of the scourge at first. Because it still occupied our thoughts, you see; and none of us were sure, even yet.

"Jack, so far this has been no uncommon story. Such things happen over and over again in India, and

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the outside world hears little of it all. But the end—that is far above the commonplace—far, far above. It concerns Camp Angel now—Camp Angel, and myself, and another fellow.

"Some day I may find him, and win forgiveness for the cruel emptiness I caused in his life. Yet I was not all to blame, surely? And I suffered terribly! Besides, I never could foresee anything, never. You know it, Jack. And the cholera scare had dazed, bewildered me!

"Don't glare at me like that, old man!" he exclaimed irritably. "You fancied just now that I had never injured a fellow—but not you, old friend, thank Heaven, not you!"

His words hurt me, yet I allowed him to rattle on. It never occurred to me to cry "Stop!" Why should I? Best hear it out to the bitter end, and then——

People were constantly passing through the saloon now. Neither of us heeded. Each was intent on a story. His and mine. He remembering and telling it. I listening for the details which had hitherto puzzled me entirely. How he talked. I had never suspected Matthews of any latent dramatic talent. Looking back on it to-night, when miles of cold sea divide us and I have forgiven him, I wonder why his recital of our story did not surprise me. But my mind was working out another problem, and I sat sternly silent while he told me of Camp Angel's illness.

"The first I heard of it, old man," he said, "was one night, when Mrs. James sent me a hasty note.

"'Come and see Camp Angel,' she wrote. 'She is dying! You have overworked her!'

"Dying! Overworked! I had overworked her! It was a mad dream! I tried to wake from it! But no! The words were before me, eating like quick fire into my brain!

"'She is dying! You have overworked her!'

"Ah, Jack lad, it is something to have the mark of that to carry to one's grave! Only my wild desire to relieve the pain of the children had made me take her. And now she, too, was going!

"The distance seemed interminable. I believe I must have walked very slowly, despite the fact that the monsoons were doing their level best to form continuous sheets of water along the roads.

"'You are drenched,' Mrs. James said, when I at last reached her bungalow.

"I know not what I answered her. It is long ago, old fellow. At least, I forget. I only walked past her, and entered the room I knew Camp Angel had occupied since she went to stay with her dead mother's friend, Major James' wife.

"Must I tell you, Jack?" he asked. "Yet why not? when you have already heard so much. Must I tell you that she was dying, and—that—I—loved—her! Why, man, what is the matter?"

III.

We were glaring at each other; he wondering what had come to me; I instinctively pitying him, and persuading myself that as he had ruined my life, he had likewise ruined his own.

"What is it, Jack?" he repeated.

"Nothing," I said sharply. "Finish the story quickly, Bob. I am waiting for the end."

"But——"

"Finish it," I interrupted sharply.

"You might almost guess the rest," he murmured, speaking very slowly, in strange contrast to his recent excited tones.

"She lay there all through that night," he went on. "I remained, doing what little I could to relieve her great suffering.

"Jack, I loved her, and she was going out of my life for ever. Towards morning she grew quieter, and looked at me with one of her splendid smiles. Brave little soul! She would die like that, smiling divinely, as though this world had been a very fair place for her; but the other—if there is one—would be infinitely fairer.

"The window let the first streak of the dawning day into the little room. All was quiet, for the rain had ceased some hours since, and Mrs. James had gone to get some rest.

"Camp Angel would recover, she thought. I knew better, and for that reason I told her of my love, Jack; for that reason. Her life might have been saved had I seen from the beginning how delicate she was, and that the infernal heat was killing her. But you understand, Jack, I kept her near me on the plains till it was too late. She died with the other's name on her lips, breathing it so faintly that I could not hear. Yes, Jack, Camp Angel had been betrothed to another, and she loved him dearly. He was far, far away, she said, but he would have come had he known.

"Jack, if ever I meet him, and tell him as I have told you, do you think he might forgive?"

"What could his forgiveness mean to you?" I asked harshly. "You have spoiled his life. She is dead, and the dead are lost to us till we die, too, and find them in the other world we dream of. What was her name?"

"Camp Angel."

"No, no; her true name?"

"Dulce Manning."

"Bob, he may forgive in the days to come; he may."

"May, old friend!" he repeated, in a hurt kind of way. "Say he will, Jack, just to please a fellow."

"I cannot. Bob, I am the other, the man you have injured; the one man your Camp Angel loved on God's earth. Dulce, Dulce! When you came aboard an hour ago I believed only in you; now, now——"

"Jack," he interrupted, "I'm sorry, old friend, very, very sorry; but the past is past, and we are helpless."

He left me sitting over the fire still, and went away into the dark night alone.

We have never met since. When he reads this he will know that I have forgiven at last, and perhaps return.

I hope so.

H. Yates.

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GOLDEN STAR

A ROMANCE

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Valdar the Oft-Born," "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

On the eve of the fall of the Inca empire Vilcaroya marries Golden Star, and with her drinks a potion, the result of which is a death-like trance, in hope of fulfilling the prophecy that the empire shall be restored by one who has come alive from the grave. Three hundred and sixty years later Professor Lamson brings, as he thinks, Vilcaroya's mummy from Peru to England. His friend Djama believes that he can restore it to life, and does so. Six months later the party return to Peru, Ruth, Djama's sister, going with them. At Panama they meet Hartness, a friend of Lamson's, who joins in the expedition. Arrived in Cuzco, Vilcaroya put himself into communication with the remnant of his people, and prepares to begin his work. He summons one Tupac-Rayca to meet him with twenty others of the old Inca blood on the Rodadero, a plain behind the great fortress. The same night at dinner he accidentally reveals the fact that Golden Star was his sister as well as his wife. It is explained to him that such a union as this is impossible in the modern world. Later on the same night he entices Djama on to the Rodadero and bids his men blindfold him. He then leads them by a way of which he only knows the secret into the Hall of Gold, a subterranean chamber in which some of the treasures of the Incas are hidden, where he dresses himself in the imperial robes, and then, seated on a throne, he receives the oath of allegiance from Tupac and his comrades. He shows Djama the treasures, and promises to load him with them if he will restore Golden Star to life, and threatens him with death if he reveals what he has seen. After this he has some of the gold taken to their lodgings, and with part of this buys a convenient hacienda in the country, and in due course they set out for the resting-place of Golden Star. When the cavern in which her body is lying has been opened by Vilcaroya and he sees that it is still undisturbed, he takes Ruth in alone with him, and in Golden Star she finds the dead image of herself, save that the Inca Princess has golden hair while hers is black.

CHAPTER XV.

To Live or Die?

I cannot tell you of what followed the taking of the body of Golden Star back to the hacienda, for neither I nor any of the others, saving only Djama himself, witnessed the secret mysteries of his strange and fearful art. I could tell you of their wonder when, after I had bidden Tupac bring the case into the cavern and he and I and Joyful Star had gently and reverently raised her from her couch and laid her in it, we carried her out into the daylight. How they stood around the open case and looked, half in wonder and half in fear, from her dead cold face to the living likeness that was bending over it. How they praised her beauty and marvelled at the forgotten arts that had preserved so perfect a likeness of life in one who for more than three centuries and a half had neither drawn breath nor known a moment of feeling.

I could tell you, too, with what loving and anxious care that precious burden was borne over plain and valley and mountain in a litter that we had brought with us for the purpose, and how at last we laid her in all her calm, unconscious loveliness on the great table which stood in the middle of the chamber in which Djama was to do his work. But here my story must cease for the time, for Djama made it an unalterable condition that he should do the work that only he could do in absolute solitude. Only thus, he said, would he, or could he, perform the task upon whose issue the completion of Golden Star's life on earth, if it was ever to be completed, absolutely depended.

He told us plainly that a single interruption should be fatal to her and all our hopes. He would not even permit his sister to enter the room until he should call for her. I was bitterly loath to yield—to leave her who had been so dear to me powerless and unconscious in the hands of a man whom I had already learned to hate, although not only did I owe my own new life to him, but on him alone rested all my hopes of seeing Golden Star once more restored to life and health and the beauty that had been peerless before Joyful Star had reached the perfection of her young womanhood.

How did I know what unholy arts he might use to rekindle the long quenched life-flame in that fair shape of hers? How could I do more than guess vaguely and fearfully at the awful mysteries that might be enacted in the silence and solitude of that vast closed chamber in which, day and night, he would remain alone with her, the living with the dead, like the potter with his clay, until it should please him to use the dreadful power that was his, and call her back from death to life, perhaps—and oh! how horrible the thought was to me!—to be the slave of the man who, by his unearthly art, had made himself the master of her new life.

Yet think of it, brood over it, as I would, there was no help for it. He and he alone could exert the power that would loose the bonds of death in which she lay enchained. Unless he had his will she would remain as she was, perhaps until the last day came, and the Lord of Life called all his children, living and dead, back to the Mansions of the Sun; and so we yielded, since there was nothing else to be done.

We three men wandered about aimlessly.

On the evening of the day that we returned to the hacienda he busied himself making the last preparations for his work. Then he came out of the room and locked the door, and, after eating his dinner almost in silence, went to bed, taking the key with him, and telling us that on no account must he be awakened. All that night and the next day, and the next night we neither saw nor heard anything of him, but the morning of the second day the door of his bedroom was open, and his bed was empty, but the door of the room in which Golden Star lay was still fast shut and locked.

How the time passed I cannot tell you. Joyful Star, seemingly more self-possessed than any of us, took up her household duties, and went about them with a quick, quiet industry that surprised and shamed us. But we three men wandered about aimlessly, now alone and now together, communing with our own thoughts or talking with each other always of the same thing, of what was going on in

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that chamber of life and death, where, as we knew from the faint sounds that every now and then came from the closed door, the master of the arts of life and death was performing his fearful task.

The first day and night came and went, then the second, and still the door remained closed, and Djama gave no sign. But the Professor sought to comfort me and soothe our impatience by telling me how long the same work had lasted before I was recalled to life. I had sought also to distract my thoughts by talking with him and Francis Hartness of all that was to be done for the deliverance of my people and the realisation of my dreams of empire when Djama's task should be over.

But it was useless, for my fear and suspense kept my mind bound as though with invisible chains, and do what I would my thoughts went back and back again to dwell upon the unknown secrets of that closed and silent room. Then I tried to draw Joyful Star into conversation about the thoughts which I knew were filling both our hearts, but though she listened to me she would say nothing herself, and I soon saw that with her the subject was forbidden and the work not to be talked of till in success or failure it was ended.

For the first two nights no sleep came to my eyes, but the third night my weariness was too much for me, and scarcely had my aching head fallen on the pillow than slumber, filled with broken dreams and visions of things unutterably horrible, came upon me. In the midst of one of them, I know not what it was save that no human words could paint the horror of it, I woke up with a cold damp hand upon my shoulder, and heard Djama's voice, hoarse and trembling saying to me:

"Get up and dress, Vilcaroya, I have something for you to see and to hear. Make haste or it may be too late."

I looked up and saw him standing by my bed with a light in his hand, ghastly pale and staring at me with black burning eyes which seemed as they looked into mine to take my will a prisoner, and draw my very soul towards him.

"What is it?" I said in the broken words of one just roused from sleep. "Is it over—have you succeeded? Is she alive? Have you come to take me to her?"

"The work is not done yet," he said. "I have come for you to see it finished. Make haste, I tell you, if you want to see what you have been waiting so long for."

I needed no second bidding. I sprang out of bed and dressed myself with swift though trembling hands. Then I thrust my feet into a pair of soft slippers, such as Djama himself wore, and then I followed him from the room out on to the balcony that was built round the house over the inner courtyard. We went down into the court and into the dining-room, and through that down a long narrow passage out of which opened the room that had held all our hope and fear and wonder for so long.

I looked up and saw him standing by my bed.

He unlocked the door and motioned to me to go in. He followed me and locked the door behind us. I looked about the room, which was dimly lit by two shaded lamps. The table where we had laid Golden Star was empty. Many strangely shaped things that I knew not the use of were scattered about. The air was hot and moist, and filled with a faint, sweet odour. At the opposite end from the door, which was covered by a screen, I saw in one corner a bath, from which white, steamy fumes were rising, and in the other stood a little narrow curtained bed, such as I had first awakened in.

Djama caught me by the arm, and half led, half dragged me to the bedside. Then with his other hand he parted the curtains and pointed to the pillow. I felt his burning eyes fixed upon me as I looked and saw the sweet, fair face of Golden Star, lying in the midst of her gold-brown tresses, which lay spread out on the pillow, cleansed from the dust of the grave, and soft and shimmering as silk.

Seized Djama by the shoulders.

I started forward, and with my face close to hers, scanned every feature, and listened, but in vain, for the soft sound of her breathing. Her skin was clear and moist; I could see the thin blue veins in her eyelids, and the moisture on her lips. I laid my hand gently on her cheek. It was soft and smooth, but still cold as death.

Then a fierce, unreasoning anger came into my heart. I sprang back and seized Djama by the shoulders, and looking with fierce hot eyes into his, I whispered hoarsely:

"Have you brought me here to mock me? She is not alive—she is but a fair image of death. Tell me that you have failed and I will strangle you, liar and cheat that you are."

He looked back steadily into my eyes and smiled, and said, in a voice that had not the slightest trace of fear:

"If I fail you may strangle me, and welcome, but I have not failed yet, Vilcaroya. It is for you to say now whether Golden Star is to awake or not."

"What do you mean?" I said, letting go my grip on his shoulders and recoiling a pace from him.

"You shall hear what I mean," he said. "But you must hear patiently and quietly and think well on what I say, for in your answer to what I ask will also answer the question whether Golden Star is to awake to life and health, or to be put back in that case yonder and buried to rot away into corruption like any other corpse."

"Say on, I am listening," I said. My lips were dry, and the grip of a deadly fear seemed to be clutching at my heart and draining the last drop of blood from it.

"Listen well, then," he said. Then he paused for a moment as though to collect his thoughts, and make words ready to express them. Then he went on. "You see I have undone the work that your priests did three hundred and sixty years ago. Your Golden Star is now neither dead nor alive. She is lying on the narrow borderland that divides life from death, and for four hours from the time I left this room she will remain there if I choose. At the end of that time she will pass beyond the border, and no earthly power, not even mine, could call her back. But any time before the four hours have expired I can complete the work that I have begun. I can bring the breath back to her body, I can set the blood flowing through her veins. You shall see her eyes open and her lips smile, and you shall hear her speak to you as though she had only awakened out of sleep. This I can do, and I will, if you will do what I am going to ask you."

"What is it?" I whispered, "Tell me quickly that I may know. You are master here. I can only listen and obey."

He smiled as I said this, a smile that it was not good for an honest man to look upon, and went on, speaking now rapidly and earnestly:

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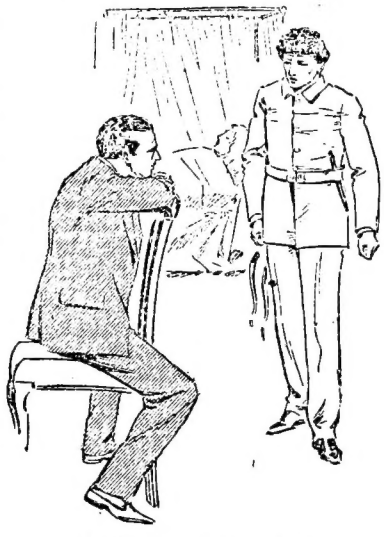
"When I did this work for you I did it as a student and a man of science, who was making the greatest experiment of his life. I believed that I had solved one at least of the secrets of life and death. I watched and noted every change that came over you. I marked every symptom and measured every step of your return from death into life, but I did all this as a student inquiring into the mysteries of Nature, as an observer watching the working out of a great problem, with no more feeling than if I had dissected a lifeless corpse. But this time it has been different. I began this work with the cold and passionless deliberation of one who toils only to learn and to succeed. But afterwards—come here and look at her, and you will understand me better. She is a woman, and she is beautiful, and here for two days and two nights she has lain under my hands and my eyes. I have given her beauty back to her, and if that beauty is to live it must be mine. Do you understand me, Vilcaroya?"

What could I say, what could I do to answer this man whom I hated, and yet who held the power of life and death for Golden Star in his hands. The vague fear that had smitten me when he began to speak had taken its worst form now. I looked at him with hate and horror staring out of my eyes. Again and again I tried to speak, but my lips only moved and trembled without shaping any word. But he read my thoughts and smiled that evil smile of his again and said, in a low voice that seemed to have the echo of a laugh in it:

"I see you hate me, as I have long thought you did, and that is why I have brought you here to tell you this. That is why I would not complete my work till you had sworn as you yet shall do, if you would see Golden Star alive again, that what I have brought back out of the grave shall be mine and mine only."

These last words of his let loose my anger and unchained my tongue. I gripped him by the arm, and in a whisper that had a strange hissing sound I said:

"But that is not all. What do you think your life would be worth if you left her to die? Have you forgotten what I said to you in the cave beneath the Rodadero? Do you not know that this very night I could have you carried, gagged and bound, over the mountains and back to the grave that we took Golden Star out of? Do you not know that I could lay you there with food and drink beside you, that you could not touch, and a lamp whose light would show them to you, and then wall up the entrance again and leave you there to think of your fate till you went mad and died of hunger and thirst? Do you not know that I could chain you to a rock and light a fire about you, and watch you burn limb by limb till you shrieked your life out in lingering agony? Would this be better than going back to your own land loaded with treasure that would make you richer than you have ever dreamed of being? Now I have spoken and it is for you to answer me."



Seated himself astride it.

CHAPTER XVI.

SISTER FOR SISTER.

BEFORE I had done speaking he had taken a chair and seated himself astride it with his arms resting on the back and his chin on his arms, and was looking at me with white, set face, and steady, dark-shining eyes. When I had finished there was a little silence between us, and then he spoke, and the first time I ever felt fear in either of my lives was when I heard those cold, cruel, carefully-measured words of his:

"That was well said, Vilcaroya. I am glad you have spoken plainly, for now we understand each other; but I don't think you quite realise the difference between your power and mine. You have, or think you have, the brute force, the strength of numbers and the slavish devotion of your people on your side, and you threaten to use that power to put me to a lingering and torturing death unless I withdraw my demands and do as you wish me. In that, however, you are quite wrong. I am as much the master of my own life as I was once of yours and still am the master of Golden Star's. Without moving hand or foot I could kill myself as I sit here before you, so your threats of torture fall to the ground. It is only a matter of simple life or death. If I live Golden Star will live. If I die she will never draw the breath of life—but what I have said, I have said. She shall only live as my promised wife bound to me by the most sacred oath that you can swear.

"You cannot consummate your own marriage with her, because in the modern world that is impossible. You are refusing simply because, for some reason or other, you dislike me personally, but I don't propose that that shall stand in my way. As for your treasures, their value has utterly changed for me. A week ago I frankly confess that I would have sold my soul, if I thought I had one, for them. Now, without Golden Star they would only make the world a golden mockery to me, for I tell you, Vilcaroya, that I, who have never loved living women yet, love that beautiful shape of inanimate clay, as that old sculptor we were telling you of loved his statue. Every hour that I have been alone in this room with her this strange love of mine has grown. First it was only scientific curiosity, then physical admiration, then something else. I don't know what it is, for it is beyond the reach of my analysis, but I know enough of it to call it love, and I tell you it is such love as only a man of my nature and pursuits is capable of. Unsatisfied, it would consume me and kill me, and I would rather die quickly than slowly. Now, once more—shall Golden Star and I live or die?"

How was I to answer such a speech as this? I heard him in silence to the end, my eyes held fast by his, and my spirit sinking as though beaten down by the pitiless force of those cold words of his. And in the meantime a great truth had been dawning in my mind. Force had ceased to rule in this new world, and intellect had taken its throne. I was the inferior of this man whose trained mind was the heir of the generations that had toiled and fought while I had slept. I was little better than a savage before him, and I knew it, and he knew it, and, bitter as the thought was to me, yet it was only the truth. I was conquered, and a new gleam in his eyes told me that he had read my thoughts before I had spoken them.

Then, while I stood hesitating before him, his white, hard-set face softened, and his lips melted into a smile that was almost as sweet as a woman's. It was that that saved me, for it reminded me of Ruth, and the recollection of her told me that I loved even as Djama did. The very thought of her put new blood into my heart. The words of yielding and submission died unuttered on my lips. I raised my head, which I had bowed down in dejection, and looked at him steadily again. Then I said slowly, and in the voice of a man that does not speak twice:

"I have thought, and I will speak for the last time. I will swear by the sacred glory of the Lord of Light that Golden Star shall be yours upon two conditions."

"Conditions!" said he, bringing his dark brows down

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till they made a straight black line over his eyes. "What are they?"

"These," I said. "You love and I love. First, then, you must win the love of Golden Star, and, secondly, you must give me your sister, Joyful Star, if I can win her love."

"My sister Ruth to *you*! Is that your earnest, Vilcaroya, or are you only trying my patience?"

The bitter, coldly-spoken words cut into my soul as the lash of a whip cuts into the flesh. I could have slain him as he sat there sneering at me, but it was a time for words, not deeds, and so, mastering my anger as best I could, I took two swift strides to Golden Star's bedside, and, snatching my dagger out of the sheath of the belt, which I had put on when I had dressed, I turned and faced him, and said:

"I was not jesting. As you love I love, and by the glory and majesty of my Father the Sun I tell you that if you do not say yes I will do with this dagger what all your art will never repair, and then, if I must do that, I will kill you, too; and before to-morrow night has passed Joyful Star shall be with me where none can find her. Now, what is your answer—yes, or no?"

He looked at me and then at the dagger hanging in my hand, point downwards, over the breast of Golden Star. Then his eyes fell upon the still loveliness of her face. He knew that if he moved the dagger would fall. His face, flushed before, at the sound of my words grew grey and pale again, and then I saw that he had not lied to me when he said that his life would be worthless without her. Twice, thrice, his lips moved without shaping a word. Then the words came. They were dry, and broken, and trembling, for in the strength of my own love I had now conquered my conqueror, and he said:

"Yes, since it must be so. My sister for your sister. Well, I suppose it's a fair exchange. We hate each other, you and I, but that's an accident of fate. Sheathe your dagger. I know when I am beaten, and I am beaten now. Will you swear that oath of yours again?"

"Yes," I said, "and you?"

I still kept the dagger within a span of Golden Star's heart, for I still had but little trust in his faith. He rose from his chair, throwing it over as he did so, and stood up and faced me, saying:

"There is no need for oaths either from you or me. We have both too much to lose to break faith. Put up your dagger and come away, and in ten minutes from now you shall hear Golden Star draw the first breath of her new life, and see her eyes open and look at you. That would be worth more than any oath I could swear, wouldn't it?"

I turned and faced him.

"Yes," I said, "but that is not all or enough. If you broke faith with me after that I should have to shed blood—my sister's and yours. Now I need only make her life impossible. I will stop here. Go you and wake your sister and bring her here. Then we will say more."

"Bring Ruth here!" he cried, staring at me as though he wished, as no doubt he did, that the fierce light in his eyes could blast and wither me where I stood. "Bring her here to see what no human eyes but mine have ever seen! Bring her here to listen to what you have said—and if her, why not Lamson and Hartness as well?"

"You may bring all, if you please," I said, "but Joyful Star must come, no matter what she hears or sees. I have spoken—now go, or Golden Star shall never wake again."

He took a half pace towards me, with clenched hands and set teeth, crouching like a mountain lion about to spring on its prey. The dagger point dropped till it was only an inch from Golden Star's breast. If he had made another step I would have driven it home. He read in my eyes that I would do so, and he stopped. Then he hissed a curse at me through his clenched teeth, and turned and walked away towards the door. As he reached it he looked back, and saw me still standing there with the dagger ready to do the work that could never be undone. I saw his lips move, but heard no sound.

I sat and watched.

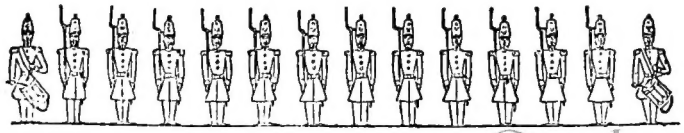
Then he unlocked the door, went out, and locked it after him, leaving me there alone with my dead sister-love, whose new life, with all its possibilities of love and happiness, or hate and misery, I had thrown into the balance of fate in the game that I was playing against him to win that other love which had now become tenfold more dear to me.

When he had gone I picked his chair up and put it by the side of the bed and sat down, still holding my bare dagger in my hand and looking on Golden Star's dead loveliness, wondering what it would be like when the sunshine of her new life should shine upon it, and on whom her first glance would fall or whose name be the first that her lips would speak, and as I sat and watched and waited it seemed to me as though the ghosts of those long dead were taking shape and ranging themselves about the bed of her re-awakening as they had done about the bed of her falling asleep and mine.

I saw Anda-Huillac and his brother priests of the Sun standing about me, looking at me and at her with sad and dreamy eyes like phantoms of the past looking upon the realities of the present. Then the shape of Anda-Huillac seemed to glide towards me. His ghostly eyes looked into mine, and a smile of pity and reproach moved his pale lips. I felt a cold soft hand laid upon mine, my grasp relaxed, and the dagger fell ringing to the floor.

The sound awoke me, and my vision vanished. How long it had lasted, or whether it was a vision of sleep or waking I know not, but I was awake now for I heard the door creak on its hinges. I picked the dagger up again and started to my feet, and, still guarding Golden Star's bed, I turned and faced Djama as he came in, followed by the Professor and Francis Hartness, with Joyful Star between them.

(To be continued.)



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A Little - - - - - - Unpleasantness.

THE Bradley-Lester wedding was a grand social pageant, with the usual number of pretty bridesmaids in picturesque hats, the inevitable little pages clothed in Fauntleroy suits of velvet, the white-faced bride enveloped in a priceless veil of old point (a family relic), and the nervous bridegroom, who heartily wished the whole confounded ceremony over and done with.

It took place in a fashionable church to the accompaniment of a full choral service, and the pews were filled with well-known society people, who whispered and nodded during the wait for the bridal party, and made audible comments, complimentary and otherwise, about the family relatives, who formed a solid phalanx in the front of the church.

It was generally conceded that the marriage of Irene Lester to Godfrey Bradley was a most happy arrangement, and Mother Grundy nodded her wary old head approvingly.

Irene was young, beautiful, and well connected; Godfrey was also young, handsome, and well-to-do. Could anything be more appropriate than that the agreeable couple should fall in love, marry, and set up another establishment where society patriarchs could count upon being dined and wined several times a season?

"I am so glad that Irene will be married and out of the way before Maud comes out," one handsome matron remarked to her dearest friend. "She was quite a dangerous rival, with her queer, big eyes and Madonna-like hair."

"I only hope she will be content to settle down and stop flirting, now that she has established herself so nicely; but one never can tell, nowadays, the young married women are the girls' worst enemies," the dear friend replied lugubriously.

"I think Godfrey can be relied upon to keep her in order," the first speaker retorted drily. "I believe he is not at all the sort of man to stand any fooling on the part of his wife. He's rather a dangerous creature when aroused, I hear."

"Well, I hope everything will be all right; but Irene is a very independent girl, and there is something rather odd about her," quoth this Job's comforter.

As to the young couple themselves, they had no doubt whatever of its being all right. They were madly in love with one another, and the honeymoon was a period of delight, which extended over the whole first year of their united existence.

Their establishment was everything that taste could desire and money procure.

Their little dinners were social and culinary triumphs, and Mrs. Godfrey Bradley's "Evenings at Home" were always largely attended.

Mr. Bradley passed the year in dreamy retrospect, as he leant back in his own particular lounging chair before a crackling log, which embellished the bijou grate of his smoking den.

"I don't believe there are many people in the world as happy as Rene and I," he thought. "We've been married a whole year now (Jove! it hardly seems possible), and, as yet, we haven't had a single row. Now, I call that a pretty good record for a pair of high-spirited young folk; but, then, Rene is such a darling; why, a man would be a brute that could quarrel with her. I wonder what Jack meant the other evening when he asked if I was never jealous of my wife. Jealous! Why, I should as soon think of being jealous of my mother as of Rene. I suppose he thinks that because she is so beautiful I must be jealous of the admiration she arouses. Pouf! I should feel myself a beast to suspect a pure, true-hearted woman like Rene. Of course, she attracts the men, bless her! How can she help it? I can't blame her for that, and, what is more, I can't blame the men either, for I was attracted pretty strongly myself."

At this point his cigar interrupted the pleasing reverie by going out. The interruption was a bore, especially as he could find no matches in the room.

"I must speak to Rene again about having the servants keep matches in this room," he growled irritably. "Between them they seem to take an especial delight in leaving my boxes empty."

A piece of paper upon the floor caught his eye, and with a grunt of satisfaction he picked it up and twisted it into a fuse, which he lit in the grate and by its aid was soon again puffing comfortably at his cigar.

"Let me see, what was I thinking about?" he mused, as he settled back again. "Gad! that's a pretty fire; feels good, too. What—what is that?"

During the next five minutes Mr. Godfrey Bradley's cigar took occasion to go out again, for he sat staring fixedly at the charred bit of paper which had fallen just outside the fender.

These were the words that had attracted his attention: "Sweetest Hal, do you remember our last kiss?"

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"My wife's handwriting!" he said at last in a tone of horror. Like a man under the influence of a bad dream, he stooped and picked up the scrap of paper. It was a half-sheet of note-paper carelessly torn off. Part of the sheet was burned up, but what remained was all sufficient.

"I suppose moralists would tell us that it is our duty to remain apart, since I have a husband and you a wife, and of course I know that the right thing for me to do would be to tell you that I will never see you again; but oh, my bonny lover, I cannot, cannot do that. I worship you, I adore you, I hunger for the touch of your hands. Your past kisses burn my mouth till I thirst for more. Duty is less than nothing to me, society, friends—all as naught beside the dear delight of your presence, the love flame in your dear eyes. Sweetest Hal, do you remember our last kiss?" The rest was charred to a cinder.

Godfrey Bradley carefully smoothed out the little white piece of paper and laid it upon the table.

Then he read it over and over again until every word was branded indelibly upon his heart.

"My wife's handwriting," he repeated again, after awhile, in a low, piteous voice. "Rene, my wife, writing like that to a man named Hal! There must be some mistake! I can't suspect Rene. No! oh, no! She is too good, too true, too noble to indulge in a vulgar intrigue. I will not believe wrong of her until she confesses to me with her own lips."

A light step sounded outside the door, and a sweet young voice cried:

"Godfrey, Godfrey, you lazy boy, still dawdling over your cigar? Do you know it is quite time to start for the opera if we expect to show ourselves there to-night? Just see how nice I look!"

The door flew open, and Mrs. Godfrey Bradley, in white satin and pearls, fluttered across the threshold, and assumed the coquettish pose of a beautiful woman who is sure of her own charms.

"Why, Godfrey, what is the matter?" This in an aggrieved tone. "You look as solemn as an owl, and you haven't said a word about how lovely I look. I don't care, though, I know I'm just stunning to-night; other men will admire me if you don't."

"So it seems," Godfrey said drily.

"You blessed old bore of a hubby, I do believe it would be a simple impossibility to make you jealous."

Godfrey sank back into his chair and put his hands over his face.

"I could get jealous enough if I had any cause," he said in a muffled voice.

Irene fluttered across the room and sank on her knees beside him.

"What is it, sweetheart?" she cried tenderly. "Are you worried about something?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my darling husband, and I have been tormenting you with my silly nonsense; but I didn't know, dearest; I'm sure you seemed all right at dinner. Can you not tell me what is bothering you?"

Godfrey raised his head, and gazed straight into his wife's eyes.

"What is the matter, dearest?" she implored. "I have a right to your confidence. Is it business trouble?"

"No, Rene, it is not business."

"What can it be, then!" the woman murmured perplexedly.

"Don't you know of anything that would trouble me if I found it out? Is there no secret you are keeping from me, Rene?"

The woman's eyes dropped nervously under her husband's searching gaze. It seemed to her he was reading her very soul.

"Are you deceiving me, Rene, my wife?"

A guilty flood of crimson suffused her face.

"Why, Godfrey—why do you ask me such a curious question? How could I deceive you?"

"Look into my eyes, dear."

She drew herself away from his gentle touch and sprang to her feet.

"I don't know what you mean. You are speaking very strangely, and I do not choose to answer any more of your questions. Come, are you going to the opera, or shall I go alone?"

"You shall not leave this room until you have answered every question I may wish to put to you."

The man's tone was harsh for the first time.

"Sir!" With an outraged gesture Rene started towards the door.

"Stop!" Godfrey commanded, and the passion in his voice caused Rene to pause, trembling.

"Did you write this?" extending the tell-tale bit of paper.

Rene gasped affrightedly.

"Where did you get that?" she asked angrily.

"Never mind where I got it! Did you write it?"

"Yes, I did write it, and if you are going to behave so disagreeably about it, I am glad of it. You are a sneak, or you would not have come to my desk and read my private papers."

"You acknowledge that you wrote that?" Godfrey was stunned. He had hoped against hope that his wife was innocent.

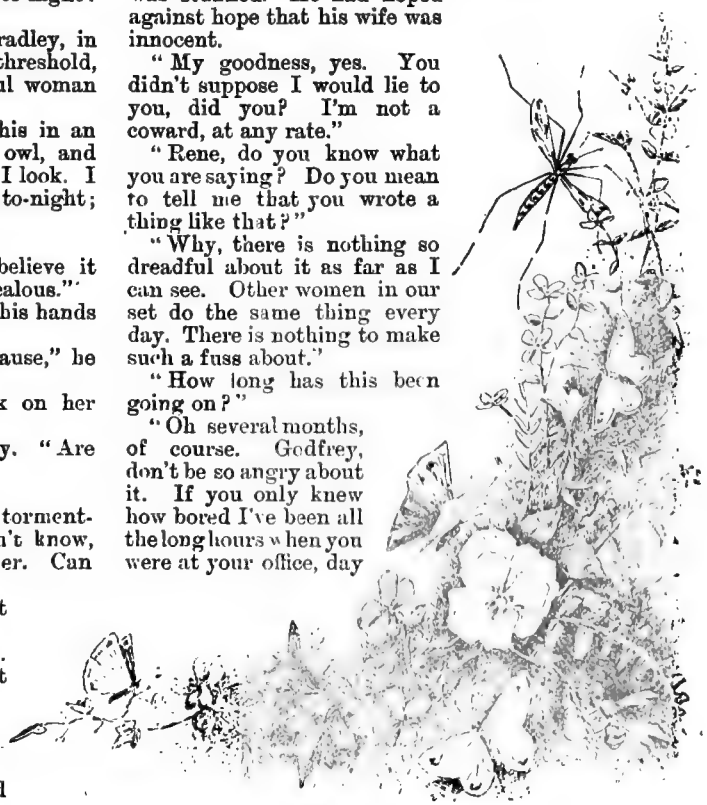
"My goodness, yes. You didn't suppose I would lie to you, did you? I'm not a coward, at any rate."

"Rene, do you know what you are saying? Do you mean to tell me that you wrote a thing like that?"

"Why, there is nothing so dreadful about it as far as I can see. Other women in our set do the same thing every day. There is nothing to make such a fuss about."

"How long has this been going on?"

"Oh several months, of course. Godfrey, don't be so angry about it. If you only knew how bored I've been all the long hours when you were at your office, day



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after day. I had to amuse myself in some way; that's all. I dare say you do just as bad things every day. Mrs. Grey says men are always up to something that they don't tell their wives about."

Godfrey Bradley stared at his childish young wife in horror.

"So you call it amusement to play with a man's love and break his heart," he said slowly.

"Oh, Godfrey, don't be so absurd. I've always told you you took life too seriously. You must learn, dearest, that you can't have everything your own way. Now, of course, I'm awfully fond of you, but I must live my own life and amuse myself as I see fit. I know just how old-fashioned and strait-laced you are in your ideas, and that's why I've tried to keep this thing a secret from you. I felt sure you would hear of it sooner or later, though, because nearly everybody in our set is talking about it."

Godfrey started violently. "Then I am the last to hear of my own dishonour."

"Oh, bosh! What peculiar, old fogeyish terms you use, Godfrey. It is positively ridiculous for you to make such a fuss, and it has no effect whatever upon me. I have made up my mind to lead a perfectly independent existence, and to enjoy myself as much as I can, and you may as well understand it now once for all. I shall ask you no questions as to how you spend your days, and shall demand the same reticence on your part. Then we can spend the evenings together, and I will promise not to broach any unpleasant subjects in your presence."

Godfrey commenced to pace backwards and forwards the length of the room.

"Now, don't get tragical, my dear husband, I beg of you. I know you would like to box me up in the house and make a perfect saint of me, but I won't have it. I'm young and bright, and other people appreciate me if you don't. Besides, every one has not your silly domestic ideas. All I ask is to have a good time, and be allowed the freedom other women enjoy."

"I don't believe you know what you are talking about."

"Oh, yes, I do, too. I know quite well. I suppose you are astonished to find that I have any independence at all."

"I believe you are mentally unsound, or you would never talk to me as you have to-night. But understand, Irene, once for all, this sort of thing must cease immediately."

"My dear Godfrey, as I have just told you, it will not cease, and I don't know what you are going to do about it."

Her mocking words added fuel to the man's rising anger.

"I'll get a divorce."

Mrs. Bradley laughed. "You couldn't get one for a little thing like that. Well, ta, ta, I'm off to the opera. I hope you will feel better when I come home. If not, I shall expect to have divorce papers served up with my breakfast to-morrow morning."

A few minutes later Godfrey heard the carriage rumble away, bearing his wife to the great society show-place.

He flung himself prostrate upon the floor in his agony, and buried his face in a great fur rug.

"She is utterly shameless—not worthy of one regret. I will put her and her miserable lover out of my life for ever. She is beneath an honest man's contempt, let alone his vengeance. I only hope she'll make that other man suffer as she has me."

An hour later Godfrey Bradley left his home bearing a small bag.

He hurried across the street towards the station. His plan was not very definite, but his intention to leave his wife was decisive.

As he stepped into the train some one slapped him heartily upon the shoulder.

"Hullo! old man, where are you off to now?"

It was Blake, his oldest friend.

"Only a little business journey," Godfrey stammered.

"Ah, so! How is that pretty wife of yours getting on? I tell you what, Godfrey, you ought to be proud of that little woman. She's got positive talent. That novel of hers is splendid."

"Novel?" The word was one long interrogation point.

"Of course. Now don't be so modest, just because your wife wrote it. I tell you she's rapidly becoming famous."

Godfrey changed the subject, and got out at the next station on the plea of having forgotten something.

When Mrs. Bradley returned from the opera, somewhat nervous over the effect of her self-assertion, she found her husband deeply engrossed in a book called "A Social Passion."

As she entered the room he looked up at her with a world of love and admiration in his eyes.

"Has my book melted your heart, dear?" she asked eagerly.

"And is this how you amused yourself?" Godfrey asked.

Rene nodded gaily. "Are you not sorry you scolded me?"

"I was a brute; but you must remember that I did not know you had been amusing yourself to such good purpose, and then I thought——"

"What did you think, dear?"

"Never mind now, love; let's kiss and make up."

And Mr. Bradley never told his wife how he had thought she had been amusing herself.

Oswald Everett.

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We are going to publish a Magazine. . . . It will be called

"Pearson's Magazine."

It will be beautifully illustrated. . . . It will cost Sixpence. . . . It will be Published Monthly. . . . The first number will appear on

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These facts are tersely put. They are to be remembered.

We owe no apology for invading a field apparently, perhaps, adequately occupied. We can truthfully say that "PEARSON'S MAGAZINE" will resemble no other. Holding an opinion, whether rightly or wrongly, that the whole conception and conduct of the British Magazine as it exists to-day is far behind what it should be, we are endeavouring to issue an ideal one. The whole thing will be so original, will embody so many new ideas, and will give so much for so little, that we confidently expect to see "PEARSON'S MAGAZINE" take the first rank in popularity and prestige from the very commencement.

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PUBLISHED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON, HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.

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THE * YOUTH.

MRS. GROSVENOR was fond of her husband, in a desultory sort of way; this was a fact no one disputed. She allowed him a great many privileges she did not accord her other admirers, and he had even been known to call her "dear" in public. To be sure, this familiarity had caused him to be banished to the side of the homeliest girl in the place for the remainder of the evening, but no other punishment had been visited upon his head on account of it, and he felt as if he had made a great step forward that night in her affection. And Mrs. Grosvenor was a woman who did not waste her affections on anyone, excepting, perhaps, herself.

When she went to North Wales she took in her train a large retinue of faithful followers, who virtually tumbled over each other to do her bidding or bask in the warmth of her smile. Clubmen as well as youngsters were included among these retainers, and the list, as she looked over it the day after her arrival, warmed the cool heart of the little lady. Then she settled down to enjoy herself by making them all happy or unhappy as the spirit moved. Before the week was out Llandudno had recognised her as the season's leader and authority on all matters of social import; and the recognition was mutual.

In the front rank of the devoted admirers the Youth was perhaps the most energetic and determined. He was a pale, thin, eager fellow, blessed with ample worldly goods and an ancient name, and possessing enough brains to enjoy life and overspend his income. He had enlisted in Mrs. Grosvenor's command a few months previous to her departure from town, and he was the first to follow her to North Wales.

His sisters, two pretty, simple-minded girls, had done their best to prevent this, but with only that success which might have been prophesied. Headstrong and heartweak the Youth smiled at their intreaties, and ordered his man to have his luggage ready by five that afternoon; and a day later, with his boxes and trunks, horses, drags, and coaches, he descended upon Llandudno, and went to his mental and moral death like a much older man. Within a week, by the aid of three moonlight nights and two long drives over the picturesque mountain roads, he had completely succumbed, and was reading, writing, and talking his love at every opportunity.

Mrs. Grosvenor was a kind-hearted woman, and she did not believe in denying children innocent pleasures. At least she told her husband so in one of her semi-occasional letters; and to have a well-bred Youth who has yet the charm and freshness of tender age about him, in love with one, is not the most disagreeable thing in the world. When one is married and has crossed the thirty-year line, it is on the whole rather pleasant than otherwise, and Mrs. Grosvenor had reached that point in her life, even if she did not acknowledge it to everyone.

Therefore, she smiled when he whispered burning words of devotion into her pretty ears—words he ought not to have known save through experience, and not, as he had learned them, through reading novels—and did not say him nay. If there were any favourites in her circle for that summer, the Youth led the list; a fact the older men recognised but did not worry over. They knew Mrs. Grosvenor; and the Youth would not last for ever.

He was an excellent whip, and the possessor of a fine stud, and when he brought out his tally-ho, Mrs. Grosvenor kindly chaperoned the party and sat upon the box with him. She openly admired the manner in which he handled the spirited four, and so set him up thereby that he could have driven all night and thought it but an hour.

As day succeeded day his devotion grew and waxed great, until the older men could not help smiling in pity.

A fortnight passed, and Grosvenor ran down one evening to spend a few days within the edge of her circle and get a breath of fresh air before starting off on the yacht for a month's cruise. He took his wife easily, did Grosvenor—and was a fool, his friends said—but he seemed, nevertheless, to have a moderately happy life, and that was quite as much as they could boast of. The Youth interested him because of his ever-present freshness and ingenuous ways, and he seemed a harmless toy for the older man's wife. On this point the man and woman agreed the first night Grosvenor spent there.

As for the Youth, his infatuation continued to increase with every hour, until one evening the climax came and he made the fool of himself Mrs. Grosvenor had expected him to make for a week past.

"My dear boy," she said as gently as she could, when he had done, "do not be foolish or rave so—your face is so much better when in repose. You are a nice boy, and I like you, but don't you remember that I am married after all? You must not say such things in earnest—you really must not. It is not good for you, and it bores me." Then she smiled gently.

"Married?" repeated the Youth passionately, "yes—to a man who can no more appreciate you than a lump of clay could; who can no more understand you than he can reach your mental level, and——"

"But husbands never do that," said she quietly; "and he is my husband."

"But you care for me?" said the youth, clenching his hands and taking a step forward, "you care for me, do you not—a little?"

"A great deal," said the woman softly, letting her beautiful eyes tell his soul much more than she thought or meant.

Then he paused and looked at her strangely, with his heart pumping the blood into his throat with trebled force.

"Darling!" he cried, suddenly, going half way to his knees in his eagerness.

"But he is my husband," said she.

Once again the Youth stopped, and a wild idea came into his feverish brain.

"Is that all—all that stands between us?" he asked in a hurried whisper. "If he were not, would you marry me?"

She smiled languidly, and a very, very far-away look came into her eyes.

"I think I would," she said quietly, as much to herself

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as to him, "for you are a nice boy. Yes, if he were—but what nonsense we are talking. Come, let us go, *mon ami*."

"Yes," said the Youth, grown suddenly old, it almost seemed, and with a strained note in his voice, "yes, nonsense." Then, as they went towards the house, so many strange thoughts came into his love-crazed brain that he said nothing more, and Mrs. Grosvenor felt disappointed for the first time that season.

A few days later the Youth brought his drag down the steep mountain road of the Sychnant Pass with Grosvenor beside him. The others had got out to walk home over the mountain paths. The road was not a good one nor yet a safe one, but Grosvenor liked the Youth, and had unlimited faith in his driving. So, also, had the Youth.

"It is rather steep here," said the latter, as they whirled about a lonely little bend, and came in sight of a sheer hundred-foot precipice round which the road wound at the top, "but we are all right if the leaders keep their heads."

Grosvenor smiled, and answered, as he looked at the set, determined face of the Youth. "I think they will."

But a moment later the smile died on his lips, for suddenly the long lash the Youth held sang out over the nervous horses, and came down with slashing cut on the leaders. Before Grosvenor could speak it had whirled and fallen like an angry white serpent upon the wheelers, and the four were rushing down the road, half wild with fright and surprise.

"Be careful, you little fool," cried Grosvenor, growing pale and losing his faith all in the moment. "What in the name of fortune is the matter with you?"

There was no answer, nor did the Youth look at him. Bracing himself steadily he guided the plunging animals as best he could until they reached the cliff, and it seemed that he had control of them once more. But this lasted but a second. With set teeth and a firm hand he brought all four sharply about and drove them straight over the precipice into the trees and brush far below. Kicking and squealing with fright the horses dashed over the brink and the coach plunged after, while the Youth, as calm and quiet as if nothing were wrong, took a splendid jump for safety.

An hour or two later, with his bandages and slings arranged as comfortably as possible, the Youth knocked at Mrs. Grosvenor's door. The people outside were busily, and now and again noisily, discussing the terrible accident, but he did not hear them or start when his name was mentioned.

Presently the door opened softly, and the beautiful woman, more beautiful than ever in her grief and worry, came quietly out.

"You!" she cried, when she saw him.

The Youth did not speak immediately, but looked at her with a question of greater import in his own eyes.

"Yes," he said at last, "I. And he——?"

A deep flush spread over her face from throat to brow, as she answered in a whisper: "The doctors say he will live till morning, perhaps. More than that they cannot say. Oh, Heavens!" she cried, suddenly, putting her face in her hands and turning away, "how can I stand it!"

The Youth ran his tongue about his parched lips, and his eyes grew big and eager again.

"But you said," he murmured, "you said—if he were out of the way—we would both be happy——"

With a cry of fear and disgust she drew quickly back

"A great deal," said the woman softly.

from him, and stood looking in abhorrent surprise at the wretched Youth.

"Don't you remember?" he went on, in a dull, half-whining voice, "don't you remember what you said? You can't forget; you——"

He did not finish the sentence, for with a half suppressed scream of utter horror she had placed her hands against his bruised breast, and pushed him far away from her. Without a word he turned and walked down the corridor, still dazed and wondering.

And then, for the first time, Mrs. Grosvenor fully realised what she had done.

E. J. Appleton.

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An Unrehearsed Performance.

THE famous tragic actress, Madame Maliba, sat in a private room of a Parisian hotel, diligently studying a powerfully written drama, in which she was to play the leading *rôle*.

Floral offerings from her many admirers decked the superbly furnished apartments; while she, with her golden hair arranged with artistic carelessness, her picturesque pompadour tea-gown, her dramatic yet graceful pose, looked what the world everywhere acknowledged, an inimitable queen of histrionic art.

This hour before dinner was perhaps the only one she could call her own, and she usually spent it luxuriating in a lounge before the fire, lazily reviewing the events of the day; but something in the act she has just finished brought to memory her brief married life, with its miserable misunderstandings and fatal end; also the vision of a curly-headed lad who calls her mother, on her rare visits to her northern home, and for whose sake she has striven so successfully for the world's goodwill.

The grand blue eyes, as renowned as her art, grew misty with tears that glistened and fell in the firelight. Again she rehearsed the scene in which the heroine, finding herself at the mercy of a vengeance-seeking husband—who wrongly imagines himself betrayed—wildly implores him to spare her life for the sake of her innocent child.

It will need all the power and passion of which she is mistress, and as she closes the book her eyes sparkle and her cheeks glow with the prophetic sense of success.

The door suddenly opened, and a voice rather apologetically announced "Le Docteur de Vigny." Ere she could decline to receive him at this unwelcome hour, her visitor pushed lightly by the astonished waiter and entered her presence.

Tall, dark, and sallow, with eyes of peculiar brightness, and with remarkably sunken cheeks, he yet presented a distinguished appearance, though his coat was by no means of a conventional cut. Breaking into a thousand apologies, he explained the cause of his visit. "Madame, I have made the science of medicine a life-long study, and have discovered a variety of remedies for all affections arising from exhaustion of the brain power.

"You, madame, I believe, are suffering at present from this cause." He drew a paper from his pocket, and turned it down at a paragraph in which the press announced "the glad arrival of Madame Maliba in the French capital, whither she had come to consult a specialist respecting the impaired state of her nervous system, the result of the long and marvellously successful run of the late play."

She smiled rather coldly as she returned the paper.

He was evidently some infatuated quack who, after a lengthy preamble concerning his impoverished circumstances, would conclude by begging a subscription towards the intended publication of a medical treatise, which, of course, would never appear.

"I am afraid this paper overrates my exertions; but what of your cure?"

He drew a shabby morocco case from his pocket, and laid two dark, sinewy hands across it before answering. Then she noticed for the first time his wildly bright eye, reflecting some hidden fire.

"A baffled genius," decided the successful actress, and she addressed him more kindly.

"I shall be very pleased to try your remedy and recommend it to others if it prove successful."

"For this very reason have I sought so distinguished a patient, knowing that when I had effected a cure, your fame might herald my own. The chief merits of my treatment," he continued, very slowly and gravely, without raising his hands from the case, "are the simplicity, celerity, and certainty of success." Then, lowering his voice, he went on.

"It mainly consists in amputating the affected member and thoroughly cleansing the seat of disease. In your case, madame, it will necessitate the removal of the head, so as to regulate the activity of the cerebral organs." He opened the case and revealed a glittering, highly-tempered dissecting-knife.

In an instant the truth flashed upon her. She was in the presence and virtually in the power of a monomaniac. For a moment only the elaborately furnished room swam giddily round her, but summoning the *sang froid* of which she had more than an ordinary share, and which had borne her so successfully through the varied experiences of her early chequered career, she crushed back her terror, and asked, as calmly as possible:

"I had better then summon my maid to assist me?"

Hastily intercepting her action, he planted himself between her and the door.

"Madame," he replied, with a profound bow, and deeply respectful manner. "It is not my rule to allow a third person to assist at an operation, as they invari-

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ably excite the patient, nor is there occasion for any unnecessary preliminary preparation. For this reason I have intruded on your most private hour."

One glance at his face showed his fixed determination to carry out his purpose. Concealing her apprehension, she looked about for means of escape. Not one presented itself.

The sole entrance to her room was guarded by her unwelcome guest. Her maid had leave of absence for at least an hour.

The apartment was situated in the more private part of the hotel, so that to deliberately ring or call for assistance would perhaps but expedite matters before help could arrive, and her fear rendered her incapable of offering direct bodily resistance. She must temporise, so as to gain time and opportunity.

"Have you affected many cures?" she asked pleasantly, resuming her seat with the peculiarly graceful manner, that was so well-known.

"Yours must have been a most uncertain life," she continued in the hope of diverting his thoughts, while she partially screened her face from the firelight, and furtively followed his every expression.

Again the glittering eye flashed as he spoke.

"The life of knowledge condemned by the ignorant; shrinking and hiding away by day, wandering solitary, starving and haunted by night, because I would enlighten the world. But they ever pursue me. Hark, did you not hear a step?"

He started, half rose, and listened, one hand tightly grasping the glittering knife, the hungry, haunted eyes fixed on the calm, fair woman before him.

"It is no one; I shall not be interrupted for some time," she returned as composedly as ever. Recovering himself, his face assumed a look of cunning that had been a stranger to it hitherto.

"I fancy I have baffled them this time," he explained. "I have taken his name to-day, and thus he admitted me everywhere; but shall I tell you who I am?" He advanced and breathed a name in her ear, a name that had but a short time before filled all Paris with horror.

Though she blanched to the lips her courage never failed, and she smiled as coquettishly as she might have done had he been one of her most enthusiastic admirers.

"Then I am flattered by this visit."

Soothed by her repose, he said, with an old-world bow:

"Madame, you have honoured me with your attention, in return I will give you my confidence. I am anxious to prove that there exists in everyone a living electrometer, answering to the different circumstances under which the brain acts, and which may attain a higher or lower state of electricity, according to the need of the patient, when ably regulated by medical science. The symptoms in your case are precisely those I have been seeking in order to prove my theory. Now, madame, if you will allow me, I will work my cure."

She rose and turned the lights higher. Her hour had surely come. Often and often had her incomparable acting and presence of mind favourably decided the fate of a play trembling in the balance of a first night's decision. Her very life was at stake now; she would make one effort to save it.

A glorious idea thrilled her bewildered brain, and steadied her shaking nerves. Her art, the goddess she had served and worshipped, should not desert her now. With an inward prayer to that Higher Power which each one of us acknowledges in moments of peril, she thought of her *rôle* in the new drama. It might answer her very need.

She turned with the bewitching smile that was known half over Europe, and said:

"Monsieur, one moment, if you please. I have to rehearse a new part for the first time to-morrow, and as it will naturally be too late to do so after my operation, with your permission I will go through it once again before we begin. Please take my chair near the fire, it may perhaps interest you to hear me." With her white, jewelled hand she took up the cushions and gracefully waved him towards it. Distracted by the charm of her manner he seated himself as desired, but his glittering eye never left the door, nor his hand the knife.

She stood before him, this beautiful, renowned woman, in her trailing, gleaming draperies, and her matchless grace, as she had stood before beings in the zenith of her success, and began to act for a higher wage than she had ever received yet—her own life.

Very gradually she awakened his interest in the plot, leading it up to the most powerful scene between the pleading wife and outraged husband. Now the wild light would die out of his eye, as for a while he forgot his purpose; now the very dawn of reason would flit over his face as some magnetic sympathy in the actress's tone awakened his slumbering senses; his fingers relaxed their hold on the knife; once it had almost slipped to the ground, but quickly recovering it he had also remembered himself.

Still, she was gaining time; at any moment now the guests must pass her door on their way to their rooms to dress for the evening. Then she must make them hear. Even as this revolved in her mind, she had never acted so superbly, had never merited more applause.

But her strength was failing her fast, she knew that very soon she would have no longer control of her actions, nor the power to hold his fancy. How silent the corridor seemed; would no one ever pass by?

How oppressively the exotics scented the air. Surely the atmosphere was becoming thicker; how difficult it was to breathe. The lights were burning dimmer now—nay, the lights in the room were a pair of dark glittering eyes. One pair? Ten thousand that were burning into her brain. But beware! his hand is seeking the polished steel blade; she must not let her interest flag in her part; she sees the only thing that is left her to love, her boy, and hears him ask for his mother; she sees the child in the play, and stands before her merciless husband, who now looks so like her silent guest.

She begs, she implores with the passionate tears and prayers the part demands; but her voice grows louder and louder, it rings through the room and echoes through the corridor, and yet the man never moves; he sees what she sees, he feels as she feels, there is a desperate cry for her own life, one long reverberating cry for her child's—then hark! A step! Two, three, hundreds of hurrying feet rushing along the corridor and bursting into the room.

With starting eyeballs and jabbering ashen lips she points to her tormentor and yells.

"Seize him, he is mad!"

Not to-morrow, nor for many to-morrows did Madame Maliba rehearse the play in which she subsequently rose to the height of her genius, for a critical attack of brain fever and a weary convalescence followed the visit of her lunatic guest, who on the night of that eventful day was safely relodged in a *maison de santé* under the superintendence of the doctor whose name he had borrowed.

B. E. Stone.

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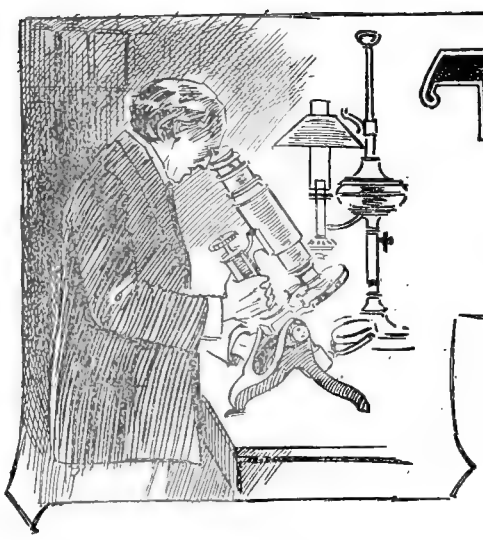

THE EYE OF THE MORNING

From a very early period of my life the entire bent of my inclination had been towards microscopic investigations. When I was not more than ten years old, a distant relative of our family, seeing me so interested in a small microscope, explained to me all that he knew about the principles of the instrument, related to me a few of the wonders which had been accomplished through its agency. and ended by sending me a valuable treatise on the instrument—its history, uses, and discoveries.

I comprehended then for the first time the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments." The dull veil of ordinary existence that hung across the world seemed suddenly to roll away, and to lay bare a land of enchantments.

I penetrated beyond the external portal of things, and roamed through the sanctuaries. Where my companions beheld only a drop of rain slowly rolling down the window-glass, I saw a universe of beings animated with all the passions common to physical life, and convulsing their minute sphere with struggles as fierce and protracted as those of men. In the common spots of mildew, which my mother—good housekeeper that she was—scooped away from her jam pots, there abode for me enchanted gardens, filled with dells and avenues of the densest foliage, and most astonishing verdure, while from the fantastic boughs of these microscopic forests hung strange fruits glittering with green, and silver, and gold.

At the age of twenty I determined to study medicine in London. I discovered suitable apartments in Russell Square, and devoted all my energies to the adornment of the temple of my worship. I visited a celebrated optician and purchased a magnificent microscope, together with draw-tubes, micrometers, *camera-lucida*, lever-stage, achromatic condensers, with a host of other articles, all of which would have been useful in the hands of an experienced microscopist, but, as I afterwards discovered, were not of the slightest present value to me.

It takes years of practice to know how to use a complicated microscope. The optician looked suspiciously at me as I made the wholesale purchases. He evidently was uncertain whether to set me down as some scientific celebrity or a madman. I think he inclined to the latter belief. I suppose I was mad. Every great genius is mad upon the subject in which he is greatest. The unsuccessful madman is disgraced and called a lunatic.

Like all active microscopists, I gave my imagination full play. Indeed, it is a common complaint against many such, that they supply the defects of their instruments with the creations of their brains. I imagined depth beyond depth in Nature which the limited power of my lenses prohibited me from exploring. I lay awake at night constructing imaginary microscopes of immeasurable power, with which I seemed to pierce through all the envelopes of matter down to its original atom.

"Ah, mon ami," he cried.

How I cursed those imperfect mediums which necessity, through ignorance, compelled me to use. How I longed to discover the secret of some perfect lens, whose magnifying power should be limited only by the resolvability of the object, and which at the same time should be free from spherical and chromatic aberrations—in short, from all the obstacles over which the poor microscopist of the present day finds himself continually stumbling.

I felt convinced that the simple microscope, composed of a single lens of such vast, yet perfect power, was possible of construction. To attempt to bring the compound microscope up to such a pitch would have been commencing at the wrong end, this latter being simply a partially successful endeavour to remedy those very defects of the simple instrument, which, if conquered, would leave nothing to be desired.

It was in this mood of mind that I became a con-

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structive microscopist. After another year passed in this new pursuit, experimenting on every imaginable substance—glass, gems, flints, crystals, artificial crystals formed of the alloy of various vitreous elements; in short, having constructed as many varieties of lenses as Argus had eyes, I found myself precisely where I started, with nothing gained save an extensive knowledge of glass-making. I was almost dead with despair.

I was in this frame of mind one day, experimenting in my laboratory on a small diamond—that stone, from its great refracting power, having always occupied my attention more than any other—when a young Frenchman, who lived on the floor above me, and who was in the habit of occasionally visiting me, entered the room.

I think that Jules Simon was a Jew. He had many traits of the Hebrew character—a love of jewellery, of dress, and of good living. There was something mysterious about him. He always had something to sell, and yet went into excellent society.

On the present occasion Simon entered my room in a state of considerable excitement.

"*Ah, mon ami!*" he cried, before I could even offer him the ordinary salutation, "it has occurred to me to be the witness of the most astonishing things in the world. I promenade myself to the house of Madame —how does the little animal—*le renard*—name himself in the Latin?"

"Vulpes," I answered.

"Ah! yes—Vulpes. I promenade myself to the house of Madame Vulpes."

"The spirit medium?"

"Yes, the great medium. Great Heavens! what a woman! I write on a slip of paper many of questions concerning affairs the most secret—affairs that conceal themselves in the abysses of my heart the most profound; and behold, by example, what occurs? This woman makes me replies the most truthful to all of them. She talks to me of things that I do not love to talk of to myself. What am I to think? I am fixed to the earth!"

"Am I to understand you, M. Simon, that this Mrs. Vulpes replies to questions secretly written by you, which questions related to events known only to yourself?"

"Ah! more than that, more than that," he answered, with an air of some alarm. "She related to me things —— but," he added, after a pause, and suddenly changing his manner, "why occupy ourselves with these follies? Come and take tea with me this afternoon; I will then tell you more about it."

I promised, and he left.

* * * * *

Two evenings after this, thanks to an arrangement by letter, and the promise of an ample fee, I found Madame Vulpes awaiting me at her residence, alone. She was a coarse-featured woman, with keen and rather cruel dark eyes, and an exceedingly sensual expression about her mouth and under jaw. She received me in perfect silence, in an apartment on the ground floor, very sparsely furnished. In the centre of the room, close to where Mrs. Vulpes sat, there was a common round mahogany table.

"You come for a communication, Mr. Linley?" said the medium, in a dry, business-like tone of voice.

"By appointment—yes."

"What sort of communication do you want—a written one?"

"Yes; I wish for a written one."

"From any particular spirit?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever known this spirit on this earth?"

"Never. He died long before I was born. I wish merely to obtain from him some information, which he ought to be able to give better than any other."

"Will you seat yourself at the table, Mr. Linley," said the medium, "and place your hands upon it?"

I obeyed, Mrs. Vulpes being seated opposite to me, with her hands on the table. We remained thus for about a minute and a half, when a violent succession of raps came on the table, on the back of my chair, on the floor immediately under my feet, even on the window panes. Mrs. Vulpes smiled composedly.

"They are very strong to-night," she remarked. "You are fortunate." She then continued: "Will the spirits communicate with this gentleman?"

Vigorous affirmative.

"Will the particular spirit he desires to speak with communicate?"

A very confused rapping followed this question.

"I know what they mean," said Mrs. Vulpes, addressing herself to me; "they wish you to write down the name of the particular spirit you desire to converse with. Is that so?" she added, speaking to her invisible guests.

I was astounded.

That it was so was evident from the numerous affirmative responses. While this was going on, I tore a slip from my pocket-book, and scribbled a name under the table.

"Will this spirit communicate in writing with this gentleman?" asked the medium once more.

After a moment's pause, her hand seemed to be seized with a violent tremor, shaking so forcibly that the table vibrated. She said that a spirit had seized her hand, and would write. I handed her some sheets of paper that were on the table, and a pencil. The latter she held loosely in her hand, which presently began to move over the paper with a singular and seemingly involuntary motion. After a few moments had elapsed, she handed me the paper, on which I found, in a large, uncultivated hand, the words:

"I am here. Question me. LEEUWENHOEK."

I was astounded. The name was identical with that I had written beneath the table, and carefully kept concealed. Neither was it at all probable that an uncultivated woman like Mrs. Vulpes should know even the name of the great father of microscopy. I wrote on my slip—still concealing it from Mrs. Vulpes—a series of questions, which, to avoid tediousness, I shall place with the responses in the order which they occurred:

I: "Can the microscope be brought to perfection?"

Spirit: "Yes."

I: "Am I destined to accomplish this great task?"

Spirit: "You are."

I: "I wish to know how to proceed to attain this end."

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Spirit: "A diamond of one hundred and forty carats, submitted to electro-magnetic currents for a long period, will experience a rearrangement of its atoms *inter se*, and from that stone you will form the universal lens."

I: "But the refractive power of the diamond is so immense that the image will be formed within the lens. How is that difficulty to be surmounted?"

Spirit: "Pierce the lens through its axis, and the difficulty is obviated. The image will be formed in the pierced space, which will itself serve as a tube to look through. Now I am called. Farewell."

I cannot at all describe the effect that these extraordinary communications had upon me. I felt completely bewildered. No biological theory could account for the *discovery* of the lens. The medium might, by means of biological *rapport* with my mind, have gone so far to read my questions, and reply to them coherently. But biology could not enable her to discover that magnetic currents would so alter the crystals of the diamond as to remedy its previous defects, and admit of its being polished into a perfect lens.

In my excited condition of mind there was no course left but to become a convert, and it was in a state of the most painful nervous exaltation that I left the medium's house that evening.

I walked home with but one thought possessing me—how to obtain a diamond of the immense size required. My entire means multiplied a hundred times over would have been inadequate to its purchase. Besides, such stones are rare, and become historical. I could find such only in the regalia of Eastern or European monarchs.

* * * *

There was a light in Simon's room as I entered my house. A vague impulse urged me to visit him. As I opened the door of his sitting-room unannounced, he was bending with his back towards me, over a lamp, apparently engaged in minutely examining some object which he held in his hands. As I entered he started suddenly, thrust his hand into his breast pocket, and turned to me with a face crimson with confusion.

"What!" I cried, "poring over the miniature of some fair lady? Well, don't blush so much; I won't ask to see it."

Simon laughed awkwardly enough, but made none of the negative protestations usual on such occasions. He asked me to take a seat.

"Simon," said I, "I have just come from Madame Vulpes."

This time Simon turned as white as a sheet, and seemed stupefied, as if a sudden electric shock had smitten him. He babbled some incoherent words, and went hastily to a small cupboard where he usually kept his liquors. Although astonished at his emotion, I was too preoccupied with my own idea to pay much attention to anything else.

I continued: "Simon, Madame Vulpes told me wonderful things to-night, or, rather, was the means of telling me wonderful things. Ah, if I could only get a diamond that weighed a hundred and forty carats!"

Scarcely had the sigh with which I uttered this desire died upon my lips, when Simon, with the aspect of a wild beast, glared at me savagely, and, rushing to the mantelpiece, where some foreign weapons hung on the wall, caught up a sharp-pointed dagger, and brandished it furiously before him.

"No!" he cried in French, into which he always broke when excited. "No! you shall not have it! You are perfidious; you have consulted with that demon, and desire my treasure! But I will die first!"

All this, uttered in a loud voice trembling with excitement, astonished me. I saw at a glance that I had accidentally trodden upon the edges of Simon's secret, whatever it was. It was necessary to reassure him.

"My dear Simon," I said, "I am entirely at a loss to know what you mean. I went to Madame Vulpes to consult with her on a scientific problem, to the solution of which I discovered that a diamond of the size I just mentioned was necessary. You were never alluded to during the evening, nor, as far as I was concerned, even thought of. What can be the meaning of this outburst? If you happen to have a set of valuable diamonds in your possession you need fear nothing from me. The diamond which I require you could not possess; or, if you did possess it, you would not be living here."

Brandished it furiously before him.

Something in my tone must have completely reassured him, for his expression changed to a sort of constrained merriment, combined, however, with a certain suspicious attention to my movements. He laughed, and said that I must bear with him; that he was at certain moments subject to a species of vertigo, which betrayed itself in incoherent speeches, and that the attacks passed off as rapidly as they came. He put his weapon aside while making his explanation, and endeavoured, with some success, to assume a more cheerful air.

All this did not impose on me in the least. I was too much accustomed to analytical labours to be baffled by so flimsy a veil. I determined to probe the mystery to the bottom.

"Simon," I said gaily, "let us forget all this over a bottle of Burgundy. I have a case downstairs, fragrant with the odours and ruddy with the sunlight of the Côte d'Or. Let us have a couple of bottles. What say you?"

"With all my heart," answered Simon smilingly.

I produced the wine, and we seated ourselves to drink. It was of a famous vintage, that of 1848, a year when war and wine throve together, and its pure but powerful juice seemed to impart renewed vitality to the system. By the time we had half finished the second bottle Simon's head, which I knew was a weak one, had begun to yield, while I remained calm as ever, only that every draught seemed to send a flush of vigour through my limbs.

Fixing my eyes on him with a quiet smile, I said:

"Simon, I have deceived you; I learnt your secret this evening. You may as well be frank with me. Mrs. Vulpes, or rather one of her spirits, told me all."

He protested with maudlin earnestness that I was entirely mistaken, that I was intoxicated; then asked

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me to swear eternal secrecy, and promised to disclose the mystery to me. I pledged myself, of course, to all. With an uneasy look in his eyes, and hands unsteady with drink and nervousness, he drew a small case from his breast, and opened it. Heavens! How the mild lamplight was shivered into a thousand prismatic arrows, as it fell upon a vast rose diamond that glittered in the case!

I was no judge of diamonds, but I saw at a glance that this was a gem of rare size and purity. I looked at Simon with wonder, and—must I confess it?—with envy. How could he have obtained this treasure? In reply to my questions, I gathered that he had been superintending a gang of slaves engaged in diamond washing in Brazil; that he had seen one of them secrete a diamond weighing exactly a hundred and forty carats, but, instead of informing his employers, had quietly watched the negro until he saw him bury his treasure; that he had dug it up, and fled with it, but that as yet he was afraid to attempt to dispose of it publicly, so valuable a gem being almost certain to attract too much attention to its owner's antecedents, and he had not been able to discover any of those obscure channels by which such matters are conveyed away safely.

He added that, in accordance with oriental practice, he had named his diamond with the fanciful title of "The Eye of the Morning."

I sat opposite to him while he nodded over his glass, and calmly thought over the whole affair. I did not for an instant contemplate so foolish an act as a common theft, which would of course be discovered, or at least necessitate flight and concealment, all of which must interfere with my scientific plans. There was but one step to be taken—to kill Simon. After all, what was the life of a miserable Frenchman in comparison with the interests of science? This man Simon was, by his own confession, a criminal, a robber, and I believed in my heart a murderer. He deserved death quite as much as any felon condemned by the laws; why should not I, like government, contrive that his punishment should contribute to the progress of human knowledge?

The means for accomplishing everything I desired lay within my reach. There stood upon the mantelpiece a bottle half full of laudanum. Simon was so occupied with his diamond, which I had just restored to him, that it was an affair of no difficulty to drug his glass. In a quarter of an hour he was in a profound sleep.

I now opened his waistcoat, took the diamond from the inner pocket in which he had placed it, and removed him to the bed, on which I laid him so that his feet hung down over the edge. I had possessed myself of the dagger, which I held in my right hand, while with the other I discovered as accurately as I could by pulsation the exact locality of the heart.

It was essential that all the aspects of his death should lead to the surmise of self-murder. I calculated the exact angle at which it was probable that the weapon, if levelled by Simon's own hand, would enter his breast. Then with one powerful blow I thrust it up to the hilt in the very spot which I had desired to penetrate.

A convulsive thrill ran through Simon's limbs. I heard a smothered sound issue from his throat; he turned half-round on his side, and, as if to assist my plans more effectually, his right hand, moved by some mere spasmodic impulse, clasped the handle of the weapon, which it remained holding with extraordinary muscular tenacity. Beyond this there was no apparent struggle. The laudanum, I presume, paralysed the usual nervous action. He must have died instantly.

There was yet something to be done. To make it certain that all suspicion of the act should be diverted from any inhabitant of the house to Simon himself, it was necessary that the door should be found in the morning *locked on the inside*. How to do this, and afterwards escape myself? Not by the window; that was a physical impossibility. Besides, I was determined that the windows also should be found bolted.

The solution was simple enough. I descended softly to my own room for a peculiar instrument which I had used for holding small slippery substances, such as minute spheres of glass, etc. This instrument was nothing more than a long, slender hand-vice, with a very powerful grip, and a considerable leverage, which last was accidental, owing to the shape of the handle. Nothing was simpler than, when the key was in the lock, to seize the end of its stem in this vice, through the keyhole, from the outside, and so lock the door.

Clasped the handle of the weapon.

Previously, however, to doing this, I burnt a number of papers on Simon's hearth. Suicides almost always burn papers before they destroy themselves. I also emptied some more laudanum into Simon's glass—having first removed from it all traces of wine—cleaned the other wine-glass, and brought the bottles away with me. If traces of two persons drinking had been found in the room, the question naturally would have arisen: "Who was the second?" Besides, the wine bottles might have been identified as belonging to me.

The laudanum I poured out to account for its presence in the stomach, in case of a post-mortem examination. The theory naturally would be that he first intended to poison himself, but, after swallowing a little of the drug, was either disgusted with its taste, or changed his mind from other motives, and chose the dagger. These arrangements made, I walked out, leaving the gas burning, locked the door with my vice, and went to bed.

Simon's death was not discovered till nearly three in the afternoon. The servant, astonished at seeing the gas burning—the light streaming on the dark landing from under the door—gave the alarm. The door was burst open, and the neighbourhood was in a fever of excitement.

There was an inquest, but no clue to his death beyond that of suicide could be obtained. The jury, after a prolonged examination, brought in the usual verdict, and the neighbourhood once more settled down into its accustomed quiet.

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Three months succeeding Simon's catastrophe, I devoted night and day to my diamond lens. I had constructed a vast galvanic battery, composed of nearly two thousand pairs of plates—a higher power I dared not use, less the diamond should be calcined. By means of this enormous engine I was enabled to send a powerful current of electricity continually through my great diamond which, it seemed to me, gained in lustre every day.

At last the eventful moment came; the lens was completed. I stood trembling on the threshold of new worlds. I had the realisation of Alexander's famous wish before me. The lens lay on the table, ready to be placed upon its platform. My hand fairly shook as I enveloped a drop of water with a thin coating of oil of turpentine, preparatory to its examination, a process necessary in order to prevent the rapid evaporation of the water. I now placed a drop on a thin slip of glass under the lens, and throwing upon it, by the combined aid of a prism and a mirror, a powerful stream of light, I applied my eye to the minute hole drilled through the axis of the lens.

For an instant I saw nothing save what seemed to be an illuminated chaos—a vast luminous abyss. A pure white light, cloudless and serene, and seemingly limitless as space itself, was my first impression. Gently, and with the greatest care, I depressed the lens a few hairs' breadths. The wondrous illumination still continued, but as the lens approached the object, a scene of indescribable beauty was unfolded to my view.

I seem to gaze upon a vast space, the limits of which extended far beyond my vision. An atmosphere of magical luminousness permeated the entire field of view. I was amazed to see no trace of animalculous life. Not a living thing, apparently, inhabited that dazzling expanse. I comprehended instantly that, by the wonderous power of my lens, I had penetrated beyond grosser particles of aqueous matter, beyond the realms of infusoria and protozoa, down to the original gaseous globule, into whose luminous interior I was gazing, as into an almost boundless dome filled with a supernatural radiance.

Far away into the illimitable distance stretched long avenues of these gaseous forests, dimly transparent, and painted with prismatic hues of unimaginable brilliancy. No hills, no lakes, no rivers, no forms, animate or inanimate, were to be seen save those vast auroral copses that floated serenely in the luminous stillness, with leaves, and fruits, and flowers, gleaming with unknown fires, unrealisable by mere imagination.

While I was speculating on the singular arrangements of the internal economy of Nature with which she so frequently splinters into atoms our most compact theories, I thought I beheld a form moving slowly through the glades of one of the prismatic forests.

It was a female human shape. When I say human, I mean it possessed the outlines of humanity; but there the analogy ends.

I cannot, I dare not, attempt to describe the charms of this divine revelation of perfect beauty. Her long, lustrous hair, following her glorious head in a golden wake, like the track sown in the Heavens by a falling star, seems to quench my most burning phrases with its splendours.

Breathless with gazing on this lovely wonder, and forgetful for an instant of everything save her presence, I withdrew my eye from the microscope eagerly—alas! As my gaze fell on the thin slide that lay beneath my instrument, the bright light from mirror and from prism sparkled on a colourless drop of water. There, in that tiny bead of dew, this beautiful being was for ever imprisoned. Neptune itself was not more distant from me than she. I hastened once more to apply my eye to the microscope.

Gracilia (let me call her by that name which I subsequently bestowed on her) had changed her position. She had again approached the wondrous forest, and was gazing upwards. The suppleness of her motions sent a thrill of delight through my frame; my heart beat madly as she turned her beautiful eyes in the direction of the spot in which I stood.

While I was thus breathlessly following her every movement, she suddenly started, seemed to listen for a moment, and then, cleaving the brilliant ether in which she was floating, like a flash of light pierced through the opaline forest, and disappeared.

Instantly a series of the most singular sensations attacked me. It seemed as if I had suddenly gone blind. The luminous sphere was still before me, but my daylight had vanished. The agony of my sensations as I arrived at this conclusion startled me. I tried to reject the conviction that my reason forced upon me. I battled against the fatal conclusion, but in vain. It was so. I had no escape from it. I loved an animalcule!

Could she but see me once! Could I for one moment pierce the mystical walls that so inexorably rose to separate us, and whisper all that filled my soul, I might consent to be satisfied for the rest of my life with the knowledge of her remote sympathy.

But it could not be. No invention of which human intellect was capable could break down the barriers that Nature had erected. I might feast my soul upon her wondrous beauty, yet she must always remain ignorant of the adoring eyes that day and night gazed upon her, and, even when closed, beheld her in dreams. With a bitter cry of anguish I fled from the room, and flinging myself on my bed, sobbed myself to sleep like a child.

* * * * * *

I rose the next morning almost at daybreak, and rushed to my microscope. I trembled as I sought the luminous world in miniature that contained my all. Gracilia was there. I had left the gas lamp, surrounded by its moderators, burning when I went to bed the night before. I found her, with an expression of pleasure animating her features in the brilliant light which surrounded her. She tossed her lustrous golden hair over her shoulders with innocent coquetry. I tried an experiment to satisfy myself if her powers of reflection were developed. I lessened the lamp-light considerably. By the dim light that remained, I could see an expression of pain flit across her face. She looked upward suddenly, and her brows contracted. I flooded the stage of the microscope again with a full stream of light, and her whole expression changed. She sprang forward like some substance deprived of weight. Her eyes sparkled and her lips moved.

* * * * * *

How long this worship of my strange divinity went on thus I scarcely know. I lost all note of time. All day, from early dawn and far into the night, I was to be found peering through that wonderful lens. I saw no one, went nowhere, and scarce allowed myself sufficient time for meals.

At length I grew so pale and emaciated from want of rest and continual brooding over my insane love and its cruel conditions that I determined to make some effort to wean myself from it. "Come," I said, "this is at best but a fantasy. Your imagination has bestowed on

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Gracilia charms which in reality she does not possess. Seclusion from female society has produced this morbid condition of mind. Compare her with the beautiful women of your own world, and this false enchantment will vanish."

I looked over the newspapers by chance. There I beheld the advertisement of a celebrated *danseuse* who appeared nightly at the Alhambra. The Signorina Caradolce had the reputation of being the most beautiful as well as the most graceful woman on the stage. I instantly dressed and went to the theatre.

Heavens! was this the great enchantress that had drawn monarchs at her chariot-wheels? Those heavy, muscular limbs, those thick ankles, those cavernous eyes,

Lying amid the wreck of my instrument.

that stereotyped smile, those crudely-painted cheeks! Where were the vermeil blooms, the liquid, expressive eyes, the harmonious limbs of Gracilia?

The Signorina danced. What gross, discordant movements! The play of her limbs was all false and artificial. Her bounds were painful athletic efforts; her poses were angular, and distressed the eye. I could bear it no longer. With an exclamation of disgust that drew every eye upon me, I rose from my seat in the very middle of the Signorina's *pas de fascination* and abruptly quitted the house.

I hastened home to feast my eyes once more on the lovely form of my sylph. I felt that henceforth to combat this passion would be impossible. I applied my eye to the lens. Gracilia was there—but what could have happened? Some terrible change seemed to have taken place during my absence. Some secret grief seemed to cloud the lovely features of her I gazed upon. Her face had grown thin and haggard; her limbs trailed heavily; the wondrous lustre of her golden hair had faded. She was ill—ill, and I could not assist her.

I racked my brain for the solution of this mystery. What was it that afflicted the sylph? She seemed to suffer intense pain. Her features contracted, and she even writhed as if with some internal agony. The wondrous forests appeared also to have lost half their beauty. Their hues were dim, and in some places faded away altogether. I watched her with a breaking heart, and she seemed absolutely to wither away under my very eye.

Suddenly I remembered that I had not looked at the water drop for several days. In fact, I hated to see it, for it reminded me of the natural barrier between Gracilia and myself. I hurriedly looked down on the stage of the microscope. The slide was still there, but —great Heavens!—the water-drop had vanished.

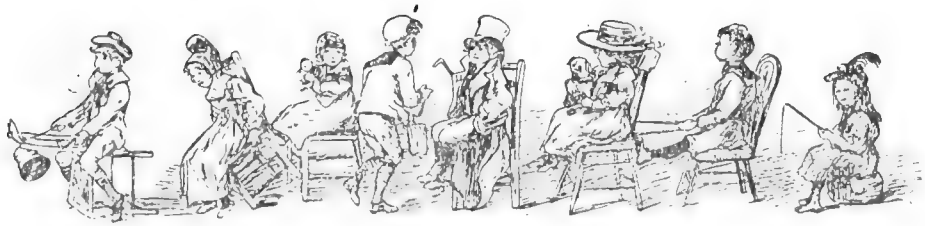
The awful truth burst upon me: it had evaporated until it became so minute as to be invisible to the naked eye; I had been gazing on its last atom, the one that contained Gracilia—and she was dying!

I rushed again to the front of the lens and looked through. Alas! the last agony had seized her. The rainbow-hued forests had all melted away, and Gracilia lay struggling feebly in what seemed to be a spot of dim light. Ah! the sight was horrible; the limbs once so round and lovely shrivelling up into nothing; the eyes —those eyes that shone like Heaven—being quenched into black dust; the lustrous golden hair, now lank and discoloured. The last throe came. I beheld that final struggle of the blackening form, and I fainted.

When I awoke out of a trance of many hours, I found myself lying amid the wreck of my instrument, myself as shattered in mind and body as it. I crawled feebly to my bed, from which I did not rise for months.

They say now that I am mad; but they are mistaken. I am poor, but I have neither the heart nor the will to work; all my money is spent, and I live on charity. Young Men's Associations that love a joke invite me to lecture on optics before them for which they pay me, and laugh at me while I lecture. "Lindley, the mad microscopist," is the name I go by. I suppose I talk incoherently while I lecture. Who could talk sense when his brain is haunted by such ghastly memories, while ever and anon among the shapes of death I behold the radiant form of my lost Gracilia?

J. O'B.



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BY MABEL MILLER.

"I HATE it, Bruno. I hate it."

She was a little girl, and her hands were doubled into aggressive-looking fists. A large shepherd dog, with coat as tawny as a young lion's, sat on the sand at her feet. "I'll tell you why I hate it;" this time the voice was so low that only Bruno's well-trained ear could have heard it above the breaking of the waves on the beach. "I'll tell you why I hate it—because it's so big, and cold, and shiny."

A large wave had thrown itself upon the sand; she reached down and dipped her hand in the ripples. "Ugh! Bruno, see how cold it is," and she thrust her wet fingers against his nose.

"That's father's boat," pointing to a sail fast nearing the horizon. "I know it, for I've watched it all the afternoon. You can't see the patched places in the sails now, because it's so far away. It's sailing on and on; and that's why I hate the sea, because it takes my father away." Bruno looked at his little mistress with a world of sympathy in his great brown eyes.

"Let's go up on the cliff, then we can see farther away. The sun isn't near the top of the trees yet. When it is, Aunt Kate will call us."

Together they climbed the cliff, and sat down on the highest hummock to watch the sail that was fast going out of sight. It was too near the horizon to remain a speck for a long time, and it was soon lost in the grey of the sky.

All the brightness was gone from the summer day. Could life hold a greater grief for the child? She threw herself upon the sand and sobbed aloud. The dog gave a low whine, crept close to his mistress, and stretched himself beside her.

"You needn't, Bruno," she said, as he thrust his nose against her face. "You're only a dog, and you don't know;" and between the sobs she kept repeating: "I hate it so! I hate it so!"

Gradually the sobs grew fainter. The sun slipped behind the western woods. Aunt Kate came to the door and called.

"Nita! Nita!" but there was no answer. The child and dog were too absorbed in their grief to think of anything else.

The wind that was stirring grew chilly as the sun went down. The dog crept closer to his mistress, and stretched a paw across her shoulders as if he would shield her from the cold.

"You needn't," she said, and then she lifted her head and sat up. "I'm going home now, but I'm going over by the 'Chamber Rock' first. You can come too, if you want to. I'll tell you what I'm going to do." She drew down his head, and putting her lips close to his ear, whispered: "I'm going to pray. We'll go across because it's nearer."

The dog got up and stretched himself with a solemn dignity. He had been to "Chamber Rock" many times with his young mistress, but never to pray.

It was not far across the "Point" to where the rocky coast opened into a tiny cove—the "Oven's Mouth" the fisher-folk called it.

On one side the rocks reached far into the sea, and piled themselves into the air. In the centre of the pile was the "Chamber," a tiny inclosure shut in on three sides by steep perpendicular rocks. The waves could not reach it; the wind passed over it; above it was the blue heaven, and in the heaven was God. Surely a prayer would reach Him from here, were it ever so short.

Nita's was so short that she repeated it twice, and then waited as if to give it time to reach the blue above. "Dear God, don't let my father go to sea any more. Please answer my prayer, for Jesus' sake."

"I feel just as if He's going to answer it," she said, as they started for home.

At the door Aunt Kate met them. "Mercy sakes! child, what has kept you out of doors so long? Your clothes are damp——" But there was something in the child's eyes that kept her from finishing.

"Well, I dunno's I blame her," she said, while she went about the supper, "no mother, and a father that's on the sea nine months in the year."

"Aunt Kate, where does it say we can move mountains in the Bible?" The plates and crockery had been washed, and Aunt Kate was knitting.

"Goodness! child, how you scared me! Say we can move mountains? I never heard of such a thing."

"Father reads about it."

"Well, I dunno—why! It's in the faith chapter, you mean. If that's it, it's the seventeenth chapter of Matthew."

Nita climbed up to the book-case and took a book from the top shelf. It was bound in dark leather, and the corners were worn to a soft grey. The gilt on the edge of the leaves was tarnished, and there was dust upon it. She blew the dust gently, and wiped the edges with a corner of her apron; then, because the oil lamp gave so little light, she brought the Bible over to the glare of the fire.

She was a poor reader, but she found the chapter, and read it right through.

Aunt Kate had been nodding. She roused herself up and said: "You had better go to bed, child; it's past eight o'clock."

"Yes, I'm going. Come, Bruno. Good-night, Aunt Kate. Call me early, 'cause I want to get up."

Aunt Kate followed her with a soft: "Well, I never!"

"It's mother's Bible," Nita explained when she had reached her room. "I like it better than the others,

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because the letters are bigger, and—because it was mother's. And I found the chapter about the mountain, Bruno. I'll read it to you, and then perhaps we can understand it better."

She put the lamp on the stand and sat down on the bed. The dog sprang up beside her and laid his head in her lap. He was interested in the seventeenth chapter of Matthew because his mistress cared to read to him.

When the chapter was finished the dog curled himself up on the mat by the door. The child said her prayers and went to bed, to dream that her father came home in a vessel with pearl sails and masts of gold, and he took her in his arms and said that he was never going to sea again.

* * * * * *

"I must begin this very day." Nita was braiding her hair, and Bruno was sitting on the rug, looking into her face with earnest brown eyes.

"I must learn to darn, and sew (I know how to knit now), and bake—to bake pies, Bruno. I can roll out the crust and put it on the plates for Aunt Kate, but I must learn to put it together. Aunt Kate will want to go home when father gets back, and I must know just how to keep house. There's a good deal to learn"—this with a sigh. "But it's for father, and he isn't going to sea any more. Won't we be glad, doggie?"

With that day began a new order of things. Domestic duties filled all the morning hours. Aunt Kate was not left to do the baking alone.

Often the cakes shaped themselves into crosses. Smarting blisters tortured the tender flesh, and sometimes hot tears left queer scars upon the pie-crust.

The afternoons were given to lighter tasks, as sewing, knitting, darning. Almost any afternoon, when the sun shone, the child and dog might be seen going across to the sandy opening near the "Chamber Rock." Nita would sit in the shadow and work, and Bruno would stretch himself at her feet, or make short runs after the birds that flew by.

As the days grew hotter, the fingers, unpractised to such tasks, often lagged. Nita liked to look at the clouds while she shaped day dreams and sifted the warm sand through her fingers.

But one day the little company started out early in the morning, Bruno with a basket in his teeth, and Nita following more slowly with a small package.

"It's no use," she said, when they had reached the sand and laid down their loads. "They make me want to play, and I just promised I wouldn't, if God would not let my father go to sea any more."

She opened the packages and took out twelve pasteboard boxes. They were of all sizes, from two inches in length to a foot. Some were regular boxes, others were made of scraps of board sewn together and covered with bits of bright paper. The covers were tied with pieces of string.

"I've marked the names on the top. I know they're only dolls, but I loved them, and I'm going to bury them here in the shade of the big rock. We'll smooth the graves over the top, and put some stones round them, so's we can tell where they are."

It was a strange burial, but who can say that the child's heart did not ache as she put away her treasures.

The days crept on: sunshiny July, sultry August. With the first week of September came a letter.

"From father, Bruno," and Nita danced about in her joy. "He's in Newport, and he's coming home, perhaps in two weeks, and he'll never go fishing any more." Her heart was so full of joy that it could not contain any more.

The days slipped by like shining beads pulled from a string; there were so many last things to do. And one day Aunt Kate said: "I shouldn't wonder if your father would be home to-morrow. To-day's the sixteenth, and he usually gets in just after the middle of the month."

How bright that to-morrow promised to be. The sky was so blue, and the water sparkled and dimpled beneath the kisses of the sun.

In the early afternoon white fluffy clouds began to scud across the sky. By-and-bye drops of rain splashed the window-panes. They had watched all day, but the patched sails had not come in sight. Bruno and Nita had watched from the "Point" until the rain drove them in.

A storm was brewing. At six o'clock the waves were beating wildly on the shore. The fog-bell on the island near sounded out a dismal note. The red revolving light in the lighthouse flashed its warning, and then left darkness in its wake, again its warning and left darkness behind.

Nita stood at the window and tried to peer into the darkness. Max, the son of a neighbour, called as he ran dripping by. He came back, pressed his face against the other side of the pane, and shouted: "The men are going to build some fires in the shelter of the rocks. We thought we heard a gun just now. A ship couldn't live long in a sea like that."

Nita thought of the ship in distress. Perhaps the captain had a little girl at home like herself. Her heart was full of tender pity for her. Perhaps she would never see her father again. She lighted her lamp and carried it up to her chamber window; this little ray might help to guide him through the darkness of the night.

She could hear the gun now as it sent out a dull boom-oom. Surely God would pity the little girl whose father was out on the angry water.

Still the storm raged on. Aunt Kate urged her to go to bed, but she pleaded to sit up a little longer.

It was in the bright sunshine of the early morning. The hungry waves had satisfied their appetite; the wind had conquered and was gone.

One of the neighbours came to the door—a fisherman who had often sailed with Nita's father. He could not trust himself to look at Aunt Kate. He pulled his tarpaulin lower over his face and drew the back of his hand across his eyes before he could speak.

"We think one of 'em was Ted's vessel, marm; there was two of 'em, one was like his. We found this on the beach; it washed ashore 'bout five o'clock this mornin'."

It was a small box with the initials E. J. G. burnt into the corner.

"There was a bucket with two X's cut in it, that's Ted's mark, and there was a piece of the figgerhead. I've sailed in the 'Wave Crest' too many times not to know it, marm. There hain't any bodies come ashore yet; if there is, we'll let you know."

The man's voice faltered; he pulled a sixpence out of his pocket. "Give it to Nita," he said.

Aunt Kate stood with the box in her hand. She must tell the child, but how?

She went upstairs and opened the door of her room. Nita was dressed; she had not been in bed all night. She was sitting by the window, her head upon the sill, and the lamp beside her had burned the wick dry.

Weary with watching, she had fallen asleep. But her prayer was answered; her father would never go to sea again.

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Exchange is No Robbery

"YES, sir, I think I may say that, in an ordinary way, I am a careful man; have my regular little ways, as you may say, and do things in the same order one day after another. Now, you see this little black bag I'm carrying," holding up an ordinary brief bag, "well, I have carried this on and off for nearly a dozen years now, and I always make it a habit, wherever I may be, bus, tram, or train, to place it by my right side on the seat; it doesn't take up much room, you see, and it's nice to feel it handy like.

"Formerly, when in a train, I used to make it a rule to place it in the rack in front of me, a very good position you will admit; one can always have one's eye on it, as you may say, and it was only in consequence of a little misadventure, which occurred to me some years ago, that I determined once for all to change its position for the future.

"I ought to have told you, perhaps, that I was at the time employed as an auctioneer's clerk, and at the end of a day I often had a good bit of loose cash in my bag, and I was, as you may suppose, anxious to keep a sharp eye on it. Well, one day there had been a big sale on at a place down in the country, I needn't specify the exact locality, and at the close of the day I had in my bag a matter of between three and four thousand pounds, most of it in non-convertible cheques payable to order, but a matter of over £100 in gold, and a few notes.

"The governor and I set out for home, a big town in the Midlands, about seven o'clock, and at Lusley Junction who should he run across but a friend of his who had heard he was in the neighbourhood, so he said, and had looked in at the station in the hope of catching him on his way through. He had, he said, been asked to obtain an independent valuer for some miscellaneous property which was to be disposed of, between the relatives of a rich man lately deceased, on the following day, and suggested that, as it was still early, he might do the business that night, and sleep at his house, going home by the first train in the morning.

"The governor asked how long it would take, and on being informed the number of articles—principally heirlooms—decided that it would be best for me to stop and help him for a couple of hours, and then go on by the mail.

"'I will give you my latch-key,' he added, 'and then you can go to my house, let yourself in, and put the bag, just as it is, in the safe.'

"You will understand from this I was well in the governor's confidence, and although I say it myself, he had no reason other than to trust me.

"Well, the valuation was a longer job than we anticipated, there being a rare lot of stuff to go through, and it was getting on for eleven o'clock before we finished. As, however, the mail was not due till after midnight, the governor's friend very kindly suggested that I should have some supper before starting on my journey, the end of which I should not reach till about 2.30 a.m.

"I was nothing loth, you may be sure, having had a hard day's work and only time to snatch a hurried meal, as whilst the others were busily engaged in discussing a remarkably good lunch, I was for the most part of the time employed in making up my book of the morning sales, and checking off the amounts.

"Supper over, it was time for me to be off, and the governor having given me his keys, and said what time I might expect him at the office in the morning, saw me into a cab for the station, where I only arrived just as the mail came in. It was pretty full, I saw, but I noticed one carriage with an empty corner, and promptly took possession of it.

"I looked up to my regular place for putting my bag, but it was occupied with a lot of rugs, hand-bags, and things, and as the space above my head was vacant I put it there instead. In less than a minute the train started, and, knowing it would not stop again till Middlethorpe, I did what I admit I ought not to have done, dozed off to sleep.

"You must remember I had had a busy day, and was tired out. I am also never a heavy sleeper, and I felt sure that the slowing down of the train running into Middlethorpe would be sure to awake me. You see I had not allowed for the quick action of these new brakes they are using now on some of the main lines, and the result was there was no perceptible slowing down, but a quick, sharp stop, which made me wake up with a start, and in a dazed sort of way, wonder where I was.

"'Middlethorpe! Middlethorpe!!' the guard shouted; 'look sharp, please, if you are going to get out!'

"Instinctively I put up my hand to the rack in front

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of me, and took down my bag, as I thought, such is the force of habit; I couldn't make such a mistake, now of course, as a man's right side is his right side and you are not likely to forget it.

"Almost before I was clear of the carriage—I was the only passenger to alight as it happened—the guard blew his whistle and the train went steaming off Londonwards.

"I was glad to see there was a cab standing in the station-yard, for, although ours is an eminently quiet and respectable town, I did not fancy the idea of walking close on two miles with such a valuable cargo as I had with me. Telling the cabman where to drive to, I was not long in reaching the governor's house—one portion of which was set apart as an office. Then letting myself in I deposited the bag in the safe, and, feeling a heavy responsibility off my mind, went home to bed. My wife was waiting up for me in a sad state of excitement, as I had said I should be home by 11 p.m.

"I speedily set her mind at rest, and turned in to snatch a few hours' sleep before going to business in the morning. Punctually to time the next day the governor turned up, and I at once handed him over the keys, including that of the safe, which he opened and took out my bag.

"'Let me have your keys,' he said, and I handed him the bunch. 'Which is it?'

"'This one,' I replied, detaching it.

"'There's something in it,' he says, 'it won't turn.'

"Now, I am always most particular about my keys—being, as I have explained, a methodical man—and I asked to be allowed to try it myself. He was quite right, it wouldn't act. I got a pin and probed about for any bit of dirt there might be in it; but it was perfectly free, and I tried it in the lock again, but with the same result; it went in right enough, but failed to turn.

"Even then I had no suspicion of anything being wrong, and it was not until the governor said: 'Well, we must cut it open, that's all,' and proceeded to do so, that the true state of the case became revealed.

"Having effected a forcible entrance, what met our astonished gaze was not the bundle of cheques, notes, papers, and bags of gold and silver which I had carefully packed away, but a motley collection of jewellery and precious stones, all loosely wrapped up in tissue paper. One of these had burst open, and two or three diamonds rolled out on the desk in front of us.

"I shall never forget the governor's face as long as I live. Before he could speak the truth flashed in upon my mind. I had put *my* bag in the rack over my head in the train, and in my hurry of getting out had taken another, exactly similar in appearance, from the rack in front of me—force of habit, sir, force of habit.

"In as few words as possible, I explained the matter to the governor, and had the satisfaction of seeing that he did not disbelieve me.

"'These are a jeweller's samples, I suppose,' he said, taking up one or two of the trinkets and examining them; 'it's precious lucky for you to have hit upon such a bag. It might have been a patent medicine man's lot! I suppose they will be claimed before the day is out, and I shall get my own back. Funny way of carrying 'em, all loose,' he added, as having ripped the entire side of the bag open, he turned out the whole of the contents on the desk.

"'By Jove,' he went on, 'suppose they're all sham! Just run round to Mr. Amber, the jeweller, and ask him to come and see me for five minutes. And, I say, don't mention what for.'

"Mr. Amber was fortunately in his shop and disengaged, and presently returned with me.

"'Oh, I say, Amber, I have got some articles of jewellery here for valuation, and I don't know much about such things. What's this worth, about?' casually handing him a crescent-shaped diamond brooch.

"The jeweller examined it carefully for a minute, and replied: 'They are exceptionally fine stones, and I should say it's worth—for valuation purposes, I suppose,' with a quick glance—'three hundred pounds.'

"'Oh, then it's all right,' with a sigh of relief, 'I was afraid it might be paste, they make such good imitations nowadays; I've got one or two more things here, but I only wanted a general idea, and I won't bother you to examine the rest, much obliged to you for coming over;' after a little more conversation the jeweller took his departure.

"As soon as he had gone the governor turned to me and said: 'Do you know, Dixon, I don't think these are samples at all, I fancy they are the proceeds of some robbery?'

"'Good Heavens, sir, I hope——'

"'No; I don't suspect you for a moment; you have been very careless, but we must go further into this matter. The police must know about it at once; I'll just go round to the station.'

"In less than ten minutes he returned with the chief of the local detective staff.

"'Now, Mr. Dixon, just tell Mr. Tripp all you can remember about your last night's companions.'

"I did so to the best of my ability, the officer listening attentively without saying a word.

"'And now, sir, will you kindly let me see the stuff, please?'

"The officer's eyes sparkled with a brilliancy approaching that of the diamonds before him. Hastily drawing a printed paper from his pocket, he compared two or three of the articles with it.

"'By Jove, sir! you're in luck, there's a big reward offered for these things, which were stolen two days ago from the Countess of Yardsley's place; we only got it on the wire from London this morning—have you told anybody?'—anxiously.

"'I showed Mr. Amber that crescent just now, and mentioned I had received it for valuation.'

"'Good—couldn't be better—and now, sir, if you will allow me, I will take charge of this lot—you say all the cheques in the missing bag were crossed.'

"'Every one of them, but there was a matter of £200 or £300 in cash and notes.'

"'Never mind that, sir, there's a reward of £500 for this lot—now can you defer settling up with your clients for say a week?'

"'Yes, but I shall have to apprise the purchasers of their cheques being lost, so as to stop payment and obtain others.'

"'But suppose I can get 'em back and nobody the wiser; what then?'

"'But can you?'

"'Well, I can't say for certain, but I think I can, and if I do it will mean the best day's work I have ever done in my life. Just give me a sheet of paper, will you? Thanks!' as the governor handed it to him, and he rapidly wrote something down. 'That'll fetch 'em, I think!'

Will the gentleman who on Friday night last took a small black bag in mistake for his own, kindly return the same to the owner whose initials G. D. and address he will find inside, when his own will be returned to him.

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"'I shall put this in the *Telegraph* and the *Standard*, and I lay we get an answer within a couple of days."

"'But don't you think the fellow will smell a rat?'

"'A deal more likely he'll think to himself that G. D. doesn't know the value of the stuff he's got, and if he did would be afraid to try and turn it into money, or if he does suspect a trap and doesn't reply, in any case you will be all right; you can easily get duplicate cheques, I suppose, as the others can't be cashed, and the £500 reward will more than cover your loss, so that in any case you must be on the right side—and if it comes off I'm a made man.'

* * * * * *

"'Telegram for Mr. Dixon.'

"'Sorry to have taken your bag in mistake for my own, containing samples, last night; am bringing it down next train.—Watson, Oresleigh and Co.'

"I handed over the telegram to the detective. His face was a study. 'Well, for downright impudence, this wins it—Watson, Oresleigh and Co., that's the big firm of jewellers in Bond Street—and Mr. Watson proposes to represent himself as their traveller, of course. Well, I am—let's see,' looking at the wire again, 'where it was handed in; Bond-street, W., 9.33 a.m. By Jove! he's not forgotten much, and if your suspicions hadn't been aroused, sir, his bold scheme might have come off. Now, then, what time is the next train due from London? 11.45; I shall just have time to run over to the station, get a couple of men, and be back again before he comes. Where can I hide myself, by the way? There's that hat and coat cupboard. Yes'—looking in—'that'll do capitally, and one of my men can be just inside your private office, sir, and I will have another in a cab round the corner.'

"Half an hour later, one of the men, whom I recognised as having been in the same carriage, and my *vis-à-vis* passenger overnight, came hurriedly into the office.

"'You got my wire?' he said anxiously.

"'I am glad to say I did. I was in an awful stew about the loss of my bag.'

"'Not more than I was, I can tell you, when I got to the shop this morning and found out my mistake. I made a clean breast of it to the head of the firm, and at once wired you.'

"'Here's your bag. I think you will find the contents all safe; will you kindly let me have mine?'

"'I am sorry to say, as my key would not fit it, I cut it open in the hopes of discovering the owner, but you will find everything there, I think. Just cast your eye over them to make sure, please, and if you will give me a receipt, I will do the same.'

"'Certainly,' was the reply, and having made a hurried examination of the various packages, he had the effrontery to take out his pocket-book, and, producing therefrom a printed memo headed Oresleigh and Co., Bond Street, W., proceeded to write out the required receipt, which he was in the act of handing to me, when the detective, who had noiselessly slipped out of the cupboard, quietly took possession of it, at the same time saying: 'This will come in handy later on, Mr. Watson.'

"The fellow saw he was caught, and turned to the door only to be confronted by another constable, whilst the third seized him from behind.

"'Nabbed after all—well, it was worth risking,' was his nonchalant remark.

"In less than a minute he was safely placed in the cab waiting outside. With trembling fingers I opened the bag he had left on the counter—my own bag this time—and examined the contents—a glance showed me they were as I had left them.

* * * * * *

"Mr. Watson got seven years. Mr. Tripp was complimented by the Judge on his astuteness, and, better than all, the governor treated me real handsome, and didn't give me the sack; but I am very careful now as to where I put my bag, you may be sure."

S. J. F. Newbery.

Something to Shout About.

The Xmas No. of Pearson's Weekly,

Which will be ready Wednesday, Nov. 13th.

JUST LOOK AT THE ATTRACTIONS IT WILL CONTAIN.

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The Queen of Night.

By HEADON HILL,

Author of "Guilty Gold," "Zambra the Detective," "The Rajah's Second Wife," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

Gaston Vizard gives to Sir Simon Crawshay an introduction to the agent of the vessel *Queen of Night*, in order that he may make special arrangements with regard to the trip of his wealthy ward, Miss Challenor. Dr. Zavertal calls on Vizard, and informs him that a new captain will be wanted before the next cruise.

The *Queen of Night*, under the guise of a popular pleasure boat, is used in reality by a set of unscrupulous adventurers for the purpose of doing away with objectionable relatives.

In Chapter I. Cyril Forrester receives his dismissal from the Flower Steamship Company for breaking the regulations while saving the life of Miss Aline Challenor. He applies for and obtains from Nathan and Co., of Fenchurch Street, the vacant command of the ocean yacht *Queen of Night*.

Becoming engaged to Miss Challenor (who comes in for a quarter of a million on attaining her majority), he obtains an interview with Sir Simon Crawshay, who promptly refuses a consent to his engagement, and informs him that his ward will be out of his way for the next six weeks, as she is about to take a cruise on board the *Queen of Night!* On going aboard he is introduced to Dr. Zavertal, among whose patients are Miss Challenor, the Earl of Darranmore (a boy of fourteen coming into £40,000 a year), and Desmond Orlebar, whose death however occurs when off Gibraltar.

A stowaway is discovered and put ashore. A well-known detective, Kennard, travelling as an American, "Gen. Waldo," reveals himself to Captain Forrester, and imparts his suspicions. At Genoa a passenger comes aboard, who is recognised as Vizard, and also to be the stowaway! Captain Forrester refuses to take him on the yacht. He receives an urgent letter from Zavertal, requiring his presence at the British Consulate. He goes, and is kidnapped and thrown into the convent of Santa Lucia. Kennard visits him in disguise, and gives him a rope and tools to escape with.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Man at the Buffet.

So the clergyman was none other than our versatile American passenger in a new disguise! I should certainly never have penetrated it, and even now I was not sure whether my late visitor, "the newly appointed English chaplain," was Kennard himself or an emissary.

Speculation on this head was futile, for the blessed fact remained that I was possessed of the means of escape, and my first act was to conceal the articles about my person, lest they should be unearthed by the wretches whom I could now truly describe as "keepers." In the course of bestowing the things about me I made the welcome discovery, which in my excitement I had omitted to look for before, that my pocket-book, containing between seventy and eighty pounds in English money, was still in my possession. On the other hand my knife had been taken away—two facts which spoke either of a *bonâ fide* belief in my madness on the part of the proprietor of the asylum, or of an intention to "go through" me again.

My watch, which had also been left to me, told that there were still four hours to wait before I could commence operations, and slowly the time dragged, indeed. During the interval I had two more visits from the unwashed trio who acted as warders—once to supply me with supper, and lastly to see that all was secure for the night. It was not till after they had left me some time on the second occasion that, the sun having now set, I began the attack on the window.

By raising the narrow truckle bed on end I improvised a ladder which enabled me to work on the bars without having to hang on with one hand, and I then brought the file into play. Every now and then some distant noise in the building would cause me to stop and listen in fear lest the steady rasping I was obliged to make had attracted attention; but no one came my way, and in an hour and a half from commencing I had an aperture big enough to squeeze through.

To make fast the cord and swing myself down was easy work to a sailor, and in a very few minutes I had crossed the tangled garden and reached the angle of the boundary wall without meeting a soul or hearing a sound to denote that my flight was discovered. A hasty examination of the wall proved it to be so rugged with age that there was easy foothold. I was up and over in no time, to find myself standing in a dark tree-bordered lane, and I had hardly touched ground when a figure emerged from the gloom.

"Is that Forrester?" came in the welcome tones of Kennard's natural voice, but almost whispered.

"Yes, thanks to you, here I am," I replied thankfully, scarcely breathing.

An aperture big enough to squeeze through.

"Not a word more till we are beyond range of pursuit," he proceeded. "Follow me." And leading the way along the lane he turned into a field which we crossed till we came to a disused barn. Having drawn me inside and shut the door Kennard lit a candle, and, searching under a pile of straw, produced a bundle of clothes. "There," he said, tossing it to me, "we can talk now without danger of being overheard. In the eye of the Italian law you are an escaped lunatic and liable to recapture; but if you will get into that toggery while I spin my yarn I hope to be able to steer you out of Genoa without trouble. It is not the police we have to fear, but a treacherous hound whom I have a pretty shrewd suspicion is our friend the stowaway."

"You mean Vizard? You have seen him?" I exclaimed.

"So. You have had an opportunity of recognising the stowaway's voice, and it was as I expected?" replied Kennard

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eagerly. "In that case," he continued, "you had better 'take the floor' first, and run through the heads of what has happened to you since we met last. But get into those clothes while we talk. There is no time to spare."

It will be remembered that Kennard went ashore to look

I was up and over in no time.

after Zavertal, and had therefore not been on board the *Queen of Night* when Vizard made his appearance. So it was at that point that I began, and while transforming myself I recapitulated the incidents that preceded my visit to the Consulate. Sitting on a truss of straw in the flickering candle light, Kennard heard me to the end without remark. Then he said:

"Your experience fits in with mine thoroughly, and clears up the only point that was puzzling me—how the Consul was fooled into playing into their hands. You acted a little too much on impulse, my friend. You have to thank your high-handed treatment of Vizard for the rough time you have been having. It would have been better to have played possum, and not to have let on that you recognised him when he so obviously showed that he wanted you to do so. Why, he went on board—I can see plainly—with the express purpose of provoking you into refusing him a passage."

"How so?" I asked, quite believing him, but still mystified as to motives.

"Simply because your assertion, that a wealthy passenger, *who produced evidence that he was in London three days ago*, was a stowaway landed at Barcelona, convinced the Consul that the allegation of lunacy which Zavertal was bringing against you was correct. But, listen," proceeded Kennard, "while I detail *my* experience. Zavertal had the start of me for the shore by ten minutes, but by bribing my boatmen I got them to spurt and reduce the distance between us so materially that I was landed soon enough to keep my man in view.

"He turned into the Via Vittore Emanuele, then sharp to the right up the Via San Lorenzo, and along the Piazza Deferrari to the Hôtel de Genes, thus proving that so far as his destination was concerned he had not lied. To speak the truth gratuitously was so unlike the man that I suspected a motive, and sure enough at the hotel entrance I found it. He passed into the hall, but instead of going on to the bureau to make his inquiries, he stationed himself just inside the swing-doors and waited, his object evidently being to ascertain if he had been followed by anyone from the ship.

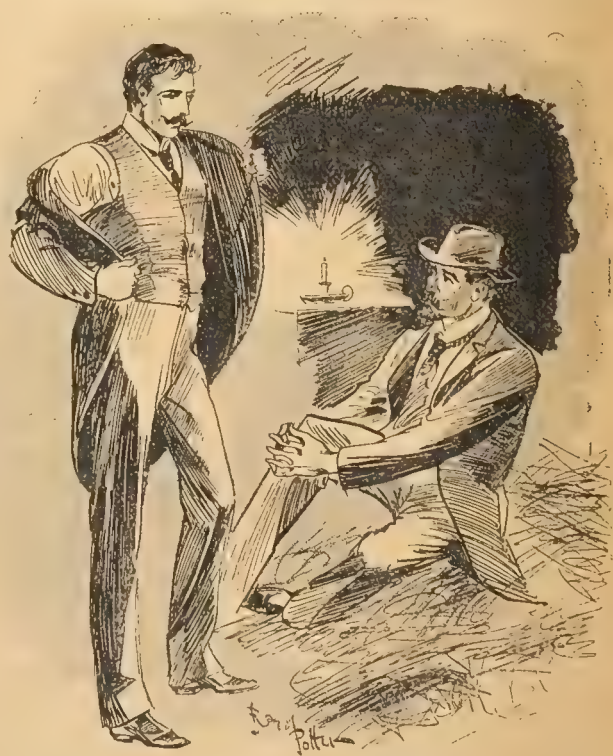
He must have expected such a person to give himself away by either coming on his heels into the hotel, or by looking through the doors after him, but he made a slight error. It is thirty years since I put in my apprenticeship at the elementary art of shadowing, and Doctor Zavertal had no notion that the seedy tout shambling quickly by was hot upon his trail.

"I went on as far as the corner of the Via Carlo Felice, and stood there for five minutes watching the doorway in case it was a dodge to slip away to some other rendezvous. But no sign of the quarry appearing, at the end of that time I walked back sharply past the hotel, and by a twist of my eye saw that he was no longer ambushed in the entrance. Once more I turned, and boldly entered the hall.

"You will probably give me a good deal more credit than I deserve for my next proceeding; for, though it may look smart on the surface, it was really only a chance shot based on information which you yourself gave me. I walked right up to the clerk at the bureau, and asked him the number of Mr. Vizard's room."

"Good Heavens," I exclaimed, "how did you arrive at that?"

"I argued it out that, from your showing, Zavertal had a previous acquaintance with Vizard, which he wished to conceal; that Vizard's reference to 'the cursed American,' and 'taking risks,' which you repeated to me the other day as overheard by you, might have meant my contemplated trip, that he intended to go in the ship in order to help his friend thwart any designs I might have, and that as he had mysteriously thrown up his passage at the last moment, he might, nevertheless, have acted precisely as I did, and have come on board in an assumed character.



Sitting on a truss of straw.

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"From that, my mind was naturally led to the stowaway and to the manner in which he was set free from his hiding-place by Zavertal putting young Darranmore up to concealing himself in the launch. I got fairly gripped with the idea that if I was right Vizard would come on by rail and catch us up here.

"I was, therefore, not surprised when the clerk gave away the situation by asking: 'Who are you, and what do you want to know?' I told him—speaking, of course, in Italian—that I had been employed to procure some opera tickets by the Signor who had just gone up to Mr. Vizard's room, and that I had been instructed to deliver them there. Luckily, further questioning was stopped by a guest coming to make inquiries of the clerk. Turning to attend to the new-comer, he promptly got rid of me by naming the number of the room—14, on the first floor.

"I found the room on the main landing, close to the head of the staircase, in one of the best positions in the house; but the door was shut, and there were too many people about in the corridors for eavesdropping in the open. I was so impressed with the necessity of overhearing their conversation, if possible, that I chanced it, and, ready with an excuse and an apology if wanted, entered the next room—to find it, as I had scarcely dared to hope, unoccupied. It was not long, I can assure you, before my ear was glued to the wall separating me from No. 14.

"To my disgust the partition was too thick to admit of hearing any sustained conversation, but certain names and disjointed sentences reached me, which by the light of what has happened since, and taken in conjunction with my previously formed suspicions, greatly tend to confirm the latter.

"The first words I made out were in the voice that I know now to be Vizard's natural tone: 'Consul notoriously obstinate. Once decided, never allow he was wrong.'

"Then, after an interval, Zavertal's voice, said: '*Alibi* easily managed. A wire to Nathan would settle that,' to which I caught the direct reply: 'Let it be so, then; I will get on board at once.'

"After another break, in which their words were inaudible, Zavertal said: 'Pietro Mascagni, of the Saint Lucia Convent, is our man. A couple of hundred will insure a quietus for the meddlesome dolt.'

"Then, with further lengthy intervals of indistinct mutterings, I caught the following words and phrases:

"*Zavertal:* 'Darranmore, after leaving Naples.'

"*Vizard:* 'All goes well could rejoin you at Alexandria.'

"*Zavertal:* 'No signs of Kennard.'

"*Vizard:* (Part of direct reply to the last) '——not do to make too sure. He might join the ship at any port of call.'

"And then, Forrester," Kennard proceeded, rising from the straw, and putting his hand kindly on my shoulder, "I caught a sentence—the last I overheard—which I would not repeat to you if I hadn't confidence in your nerve. Of course, I have not been so blind as not to notice what everyone on the ship noticed—your relations with the belle of the voyage."

"Good God!" I exclaimed; "then the fiends *are* scheming against Aline! Yes," I added, "you may safely tell me. I shall not hamper you with hysterics."

"Well, then," said Kennard, "the last broken sentence that reached me was in Zavertal's voice: '*The Challenor affair in the run from Alexandria to Malta.*'"

"And we are stranded here," I groaned. "Tell me, though—I wonder I have not asked before—how long is it since I was captured?"

"Only this morning," replied Kennard; "and look here, Forrester," he went on, "the time is not come for despair yet. It might be a good deal worse. We know, at any rate, that whatever tricks they mean to play with Lord Darranmore are postponed till after the ship leaves Naples. That must be three days ahead at least, and long before then, with any luck, we shall be within hail of the *Queen of Night*. And what they politely call 'the Challenor affair,' is not to come off till after the ship has visited Alexandria, which allows a wide margin in case of any miscarriage at Naples.

"But let me finish my story. After the last words that reached me there was a continuous buzz of talk for a quarter of an hour, then the sound of movement, and a minute later I heard the door of No. 14 open, and someone go towards the staircase. I was at the door of No. 13 in time to see that it was a tall man—just the build of 'Enriquez,' by the way—and not for a moment to be mistaken for Zavertal, who had clearly remained behind to prevent being seen with his friend, in case they were being watched.

"I was immediately confronted with the dilemma which of the two to shadow, and as I knew a lot against the Doctor, and had nothing but suspicion against the other, I decided to stay and keep an eye on Zavertal. I think now that I was wrong, and that I should have done better by following Vizard on board, for in that case you would never have fallen into this trap.

"Vizard disappeared down the stairs, and I withdrew into the vacant room till Zavertal came out of No. 14, when I started on the chase again. Outside the hotel he hailed a *carroza* and drove to the convent of Santa Lucia, I following in another cab. He remained close on an hour, and I was unable to find out what had transpired, though I now know that he must have been arranging for your capture, detention, and, very likely, for your murder,

Vizard disappeared down the stairs.

in the event of the Consul being hoodwinked into treating you as a lunatic unfit to command the ship.

"When he left the convent he drove back to the neigh-

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bourhood of the Hôtel de Gênes, and for the rest of the evening I was dodging him in various restaurants, where his sole object appears to have been to kill time till Vizard should rejoin him after being turned out of the ship by you. This occurred about nine o'clock, the meeting taking place outside the hotel, after which they walked off to the telegraph office in the Palazzo Ducale—I guess for the purpose of cabling Nathan to wire out that Vizard was in London three days ago.

"From the telegraph office they returned to the hotel, and as I was able to ascertain that the doctor had engaged a bed, and that they had both retired to their rooms, I went to spend the night at a neighbouring inn in order to be ready for them in the morning. After breakfast the pair came out together, boldly this time, and went together to the Consulate, where they remained till half an hour after I had witnessed your arrival from a shop opposite.

"Unfortunately there had been nothing in what I had overheard to indicate that *you* were to be the victim of a plot, and I had no notion of what was going on till I saw you driven away insensible by the superintendent of the asylum and his assistants. After I had shadowed Vizard back to the hotel, Zavertal having parted with him on the quay to return to the ship, I made some inquiries which showed that it would be hopeless to approach the Consul, so satisfied was he of your condition, and I at once set about procuring your escape in my own way. And now, when I have touched up your face a little, we will get on to the station, and catch the first train to the south."

Drawing an actor's make-up box from his bag, he soon altered my complexion to suit the clothes I had put on, and after making my own clothes into a bundle, we started towards the city. Kennard got over the difficulty of my not knowing a word of the language by arranging that I should feign to be dumb. Before relapsing into silence I asked him what he thought of Vizard's remaining in Genoa.

"He is here to look after you," was the reply, "and I should not be surprised if he has heard of your escape already. I surmise that we have a dangerous organisation of educated criminals to deal with, and that Nathan is in it. But I shall know more to-morrow."

This was lively hearing, when I had been relying on an appeal to my employers to reinstate me in my command, and turn the tables on Zavertal! But it was no use whining over the loss of a berth when I was about to pit myself against him in a game where the issues loomed up so much more terrible. I had no thought but to prevent and expose those conspiring scoundrels, and if, indeed, lives were at stake, to save their intended victims.

He soon altered my complexion.

We reached the Stazione Brignole, with a quarter of an hour to spare before the 11.40 night train to the south was due, and after Kennard had taken tickets for Naples, being fatigued and hungry, we went into the buffet for a snack. The place was full of travellers fortifying themselves for the long run to Pisa and we had some difficulty in squeezing up to the counter, but we managed it at last, and Kennard did the ordering.

"Don't give yourself away like that."

A long mirror stretched the length of the buffet opposite to us, reflecting the people at the counter, and glancing along the line of faces while waiting to be served I started so violently as to nearly capsize an old lady behind me. Within a few feet from us stood Vizard, apparently absorbed in dissecting the wing of a fowl.

CHAPTER XV.

Red Heart and Black Arrow.

Half fascinated, I was continuing to gaze at Vizard's face in the mirror when I felt a touch on my shoulder, and looking round caught Kennard's warning eye.

"Don't give yourself away like that," he whispered. "Go out on to the platform. I will join you directly and bring your refreshments to you. He has not seen you yet, I think."

I slipped quietly from the counter out into the dimly-lighted platform, and waited anxiously for Kennard's coming in the darkest corner I could find. He was longer than I expected, but when he did appear I was able to guess from his manner that something important had occurred.

"I have been picking pockets; I will examine the plunder while you eat," was the astonishing remark with which he handed me a packet of sandwiches and a flask of wine. The moment I had relieved him of the provender he walked to the nearest flickering gas-jet and proceeded to scrutinise what looked like several visiting cards. When he had held them all up to the light in turn, and turned them over and over again, he came back to me, his keen eyes twinkling brightly in the gloom.

"I have scored one against them at last," he said, "but there is no time to tell you now, for here comes the train. Stand well back in the shadow. We must be guided by

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circumstances on the journey, but if by any chance I am separated from you, make the best of your way to Naples, and wait for the ship. Once out of Genoa, at the first opportunity you may safely resume your own character again. Ah, there comes Vizard from the buffet! He must be confident of your going south, for he is making straight for that first-class carriage without any attempt to watch the passengers. Come this way."

The train had clanked itself to a standstill, and the usual scramble for seats had begun. Vizard went to a carriage nearly opposite the refreshment room, and as I followed Kennard to a third-class compartment nearer the engine I saw that my enemy had already seated himself in a corner and had begun to read a paper as though not at all interested in surroundings. Kennard chose a compartment in which three Italians of the peasant class were travelling, and he paused on the step to say in a whisper that for the present I had better remain dumb.

We started without further incident, and my companion was soon chattering in their own tongue to the Italians, explaining, as I guessed from his gestures towards myself, and from the sympathetic glances thrown at me, the nature of my supposed infirmity. At Chiavari, an hour after starting, one of our fellow-travellers left the carriage, and thence onward as far as Spezia, which we reached at two o'clock in the morning, we were alone with an old woman and her son. As the train steamed into Spezia they, too, made preparations for departure, and I looked forward to being able to indulge in the relief of speech during the rest of the journey.

When the train had stopped and the Italians had got out, Kennard also rose.

"Keep your seat," he said. "There is a five minutes' wait here, and I want to try an experiment."

He disappeared among the crowd on the platform, and I sat in the far corner, hoping that at that early hour no strangers would get in. Four of the five minutes had passed when the sight of Vizard, strolling slowly along the line of carriages, caused me to shrink back and shade my face with my hand. But peeping between my fingers, I saw that he kept his eyes straight in front, and showed no sign of interest in the compartment as he went by. Half a minute later he repassed, going towards the carriage he had entered at Genoa, and a few seconds after Kennard rejoined me, jumping in just as the train was beginning to move.

"I wanted to test him, to see if he had penetrated my disguise, or could recognise me as the 'General Waldo' whom he saw on board when he was a stowaway steward," said the detective, pulling up the window and seating himself opposite. "He doesn't know me from Adam."

"He passed this carriage while you were gone," I said.

"Quite so, and it is very probable that he spotted you, if he did not at Genoa," replied Kennard. "But the great thing is that he doesn't know *me*. I am most anxious that he should not discover that you are accompanied by the sham chaplain who assisted your escape. He has probably been informed of that episode, and my identity must be puzzling him not a little."

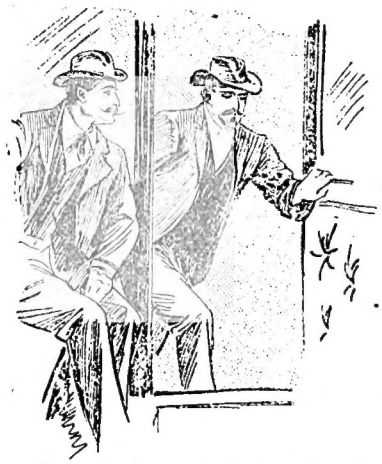
"When Zavertal got back to the ship and found 'General Waldo' missing, he would begin to suspect, would he not?" I said.

"He might if he knew what had since occurred on shore," replied Kennard, "but there has been no means of communication between the two as yet. It is even possible that Vizard, having heard of me from the Doctor, may guess whence the opposition to their schemes arises, but he has no personal knowledge of me, and I want to keep my character of 'Waldo' unsuspected by them, so that I may use it again if necessary.

"That he has not recognised me in my present get up as that same twaddling old fool is very certain, for I tried him pretty high. I put my head in at his carriage window and asked him if there was anything I could do for him—pretending to be a station tout, you know. Here is good evidence that he has not seen us in company, and that he does not remember me as a man he has seen before."

Kennard put into my hands a scrap of paper, on which were pencilled the words, "Nathan and Co., London," followed by a queer jumble of letters that conveyed nothing to me.

"It is a cypher telegram," explained Kennard. "He had no time to send it himself, and gave me a couple of *lire* to despatch it for him. He could hardly have furnished a higher proof of confidence in my being what I professed to be, and the incident is moreover useful as showing collusion between him and the owners of the *Queen of Night*. If we only had the key to that cypher, what a lot of trouble it would save us! But perhaps I may put my hand on it some day."



Jumping in as the train was just beginning to move.

"At Genoa you said something about picking pockets," I said, wondering if ever a plain sailor had got pitchforked into such a strange tangle before.

"Yes," was the reply, "I thought that the end justified the means, and I took the liberty of relieving Mr. Vizard of a portion of the contents of his ticket pocket. I have told you already that I believe we have a gang of dangerous criminals to deal with, and I had cabled from Genoa to a friend in London for certain information that might help me. What I took from Vizard's pocket, however, confirms my view, without making it necessary for me to wait for my friend's reply. Unfortunately, my discovery only hints vaguely at the powerful combination arrayed against us without pointing directly to the nature or method of their designs. Still less is there any proof of crime committed or contemplated, that will enable us to call in the power of the law."

I saw that for some reason he was not desirous of imparting to me exactly what it was that he had gathered from the cards which I had seen him examining, and I forebore to question him on the subject. I know now that the cause of his reticence on the nature of his discovery lay in the fear that it might be a source of danger to me, and yet strangely enough he was shortly to be the means, on the spur of the moment, of exposing me to that very danger.

I could not resist, however, asking to be allowed to share the theory he had evidently formed as to the plots in which Zavertal and Vizard were engaged. I had understood, of course, that he apprehended danger to the lives of some of the passengers on the *Queen of Night*, Aline being among the number, but the why and the wherefore were what I was totally unable to fathom.

He thought a little before answering, and then said: "Well, it is fair that you should know, for I think that we shall either break up the combination once for all or both lose our lives in the attempt. My belief is that the ship you recently commanded is nothing more nor less than a floating murder-trap, in which Zavertal is engaged by the owners, they themselves receiving enormous fees from interested parties, to poison certain of the passengers every voyage. It is a syndicate of professional criminals working regularly for a gigantic stake. If I am right they must net say forty or fifty thousand pounds a voyage over and above their

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legitimate profits on the professed pleasure-cruise, and they no doubt are large."

"But how could such a systematic business be carried on—how could wretches wishing to use such an institution

Kennard opened the other door and sprang into the compartment.

know of its existence?" I cried, aghast at the magnitude his suggestion.

"By means of perfect organisation, and through the details only being known to the principals who carry them out," was the reply. "For instance, you yourself have in a way been made an agent in the affair by being intrusted with the technical command of the ship, yet you were ignorant of her real mission. I think it probable that Nathan, Vizard, and Zavertal are the sole partners in the scheme and are the actual owners of the vessel, Vizard's share of the work being, as a rule, to mix in society and make the first insidious advances to likely clients with superfluous relatives. Vizard, we know, keeps his connection with the ship a strict secret, so that possibly the amateur criminals he procures are handed over to Nathan for the final bargain to be struck."

I shuddered as I thought of Nathan's unaccountable call at Sir Simon Crawshay's house on the day I was there, and of the cheque-book which the baronet was putting away when I entered his study. Kennard looked very grave when I mentioned what I had seen.

"All points the same way," he said, and relapsed into silence, from which I failed to tempt him till the train began to slacken speed for the quarter of an hour's stop at Pisa. Then he expressed his intention of again minimising the risk of Vizard associating the two of us by leaving the carriage while we were in the station. "Keep my seat for me in case anyone gets in—though that is not likely," he added, slipping from the footboard directly we reached the platform.

Pisa being the junction for the port and favourite watering-place of Leghorn, there was plenty of bustle in the station, though most of the passengers being English and American tourists travelling first-class, there seemed every chance of our retaining our privacy. There was the usual scramble for the refreshment-room, the door of which was within view of where I sat, but neither among the crowds jostling into it, or passing the carriage, as at Spezia, did I catch a glimpse of Vizard. The time went slowly, and I was glad when the bell rang at last and the people hurried back to their seats.

Sitting in the corner furthest from the platform, I watched eagerly for Kennard's return, wondering if he would bring any news. Suddenly, just as I caught sight of him approaching the carriage, the sound of breathing within a few inches of my face caused me to look round at the open window next which I was sitting. There, close to me, and within touch of my hand, stood Vizard on the footboard, his handsome features ablaze with triumphant malice. I had barely time to see the gleam of steel in his clenched fist, when Kennard opened the other door and sprang into the compartment, the train beginning to move at the same moment. He took in the situation at a glance, and his eyes snapped fire.

"*The Black Arrow pierces the Red Heart no more,*" he cried, and, dashing past me, sprang out, two seconds after Vizard with a bitter curse had disappeared in the darkness.

In another minute the train had gathered speed, and I was alone in the carriage—bereft of friend and foe.

(To be continued.)

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